LIFE STORY

of

Mr. A. M. ARATHOON

By

H. M. NADJARIAN

1958

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I record the sunny hours

DEDICATION

This Book Has Been Most
Respectfully Dedicated
To The Memory of The Late
Mrs. Ethel Arathoon
Whom The Author
Held In High
Esteem.

PREFACE

From earliest boyhood I have been fond of scribbling notes and keeping records of things that happened around me For many years I collected cuttings from newspapers and pasted them in cutting books under various headings. Such items were mostly concerning Armenians in India and abroad. A large collection of cuttings were made during the first World War and subsequent years when newspapers were full of matters pertaining to Armenians.

Unfortunately, due to stress of business occupation and family cares, this trend was not continued. Only recent years have given me sufficient leisure, once again, to continue with my former hobby.

This therefore provides the background for my taking upon myself to write the "Life Story of Mr. A. M. Arathoon."

My acquaintance with Mr. Arathoon began even before I met him. When it was decided that I should go to Calcutta, my mother mentioned Mr. Arathoon's name, because young Arathoon was known to her family. My maternal grandfather, the well known Rev. Mnatsakan George was in charge of the orphanage mentioned in this book.

When I first met Mr Arathoon, sitting at his rolled top desk at the corner of the large hall at 57, Radha Bazar Street, as soon as I said that I was the grandson of the Rev. Mnatsakan George, Mr. Arathoon said "then you must be Manjik's son." My mother's pet name was not known to me, and I insisted that my mother's name was Elizabeth. It was only then that Mr. Arathoon explained how he was acquainted with my mother's family, because he had been one of the boys of the orphanage for several years, along with others, some of whom were then in Calcutta.

By way of information, it may be mentioned that among those who went to the schools established by Dr. Bruce in Julfa were the late Mr Mesrovb J. Seth, author of "Armenians in India," his brother, the late Dr S. J Seth, who had a medical practice in Calcutta, the late Rev. V S Vardon, priest of the Armenian Church in Calcutta, and one time officiating Principal of the Armenian College, and last but not least the late Mr D. A. David, Founder of the Davidian Girls School, Calcutta. The latter idolised Dr. Bruce and had reverently preserved a certificate given him by Dr Bruce.

The information about Mr. Arathoon has been mostly collected from many friendly chats I have had with him, from his well kept diaries, from records of his activities in the Armenian Church and the Armenian College, and from several newspaper cuttings and sources connected with Mr Arathoon's business associates It has been my desire to tell of a life of hard work, constant per-

severence, resistance to adverse conditions, complete self-confidence and trust in God.

In writing Mr. Arathoon's life story it has also been my desire to set forth for generations to come, information about how our compatriots lived, toiled and earned their wealth, in this hospitable country of their adoption , and how in doing so, they have also helped the progress of industry in the country.

Had there been similar records of individual lives of some of our compatriots from the time of Akbar the Great, when the first few Armenians came to India, up till now, such records would today have become valuable assets to a fuller history of our people and the people around us during the tumultuous and eventful history of this country during the last three centuries. Unfortunately no such records exist and our historians have had to gather their information from a few Armenian periodicals published spasmodically, and from the silent tombstones of those gone before.

It is my earnest hope that this publication pertaining to 'one of the least of our brethern' may be the beginning of a series of such life stories and that this example may be followed by those who have similar desire and liking for recording happenings of interest, for the benefit of posterity.

H. M. NADJARIAN.
Calcutta. 29th April 1958

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CHAPTER I

BOYHOOD

This is the story of a small boy who grew to be a pioneer and a man of affluence · who was born in a little known part of Persia of parents who were not wealthy, who lost his father at the tender age of eight, who set out for India with only a primary schooling when he was not yet fifteen, who went to work immediately without much ado—and is to-day a man of means with a business which will shortly celebrate its Diamond Jubilee , a man who is held in high esteem by his community and Calcutta business circles alike : he is eighty-three years old and still guides the fortunes of his firm.

He is Mr A. M. Arathoon, of A. M. Arathoon Private Ltd., and is commonly known as "Jhalda" Arathoon because he founded the place, now an important shellac manufacturing centre.

Born in the village of Boldaji in the province of Charmahal, in Persia, on the 29th April 1875, he obtained his first glimpse of pencil and paper in his native village along with the rest of the village youth. The School premises in summer was the house of the solitary learned in the village, and in winter above the warm stables of the village.

His father, who could read and write a little, had helped him considerably in reading the well used Bible of the village Church. Wherever the text was difficult the young student would run over the portion by heart, having repeated it so often At this very early age young Arathoon had shown a keen aptitude for learning

Unfortunately, the father died while Arathoon was yet a stripling. His mother decided to sell out and proceed to New Julfa, a suburb of Isphahan, where she had a relative and where she thought work could easier be obtained She took her three sons and the youngest girl with her. Arathoon's eldest sister, who was married, remained in the village.

On arrival in Julfa, the mother took up such work as came her way and helped to keep the family. Friends suggested the two older boys be put to work, so young Arathoon was sent to the cloth mill attached to the orphange which had been established in New Julfa about the year 1869 by the Church Missionary Society of London, under the guidance of Dr. R. Bruce

Here a word about the Church Mission in New Julfa would be appropriate

Dr. R Bruce of the Church Missionary Society was again in Persia in the year 1883 revising Henry Martyn's Translation of the New Testament into Persian. He had earlier established his headquarters among the Christian Community of Armenians in New Julfa and had founded

schools for boys and girls, and had later established an orphange where the boys worked in the day and studied in the evening, getting their board and lodging in the orphanage premises

The Mission rendered valuable service to the Armenian Community, many of whose children received their early education in these schools. Most of the students later proved to be very useful members of the community as Priests (of the Armenian Church), scholars, teachers and authors. The mission extended its work among the Persians of Isphahan. It still maintains the schools to-day, (1958) though with greately reduced numbers.

Returning to our story, the young lad, only 10 years old now, started work on the hand looms and showed keen intelligence and diligence in whatever was given him to do. He also showed special keenness and proficiency in his evening classes, so much so, that after some time he was permitted to discontinue his work on the looms and to attend school the whole day.

Having first been sent to the girls school where the younger children learned their alphabets, he was found above the average and was sent to the boys school, where his promotion was quick and his advance rapid At this time among the workers in the Church Missionary Society was also Rev. Mnatsakan (Minas) George, who had been ordained a pastor. An extract from the History of the Church Missionary Society Vol. 3—page 516 by Eugene Stock would better summarise the picture of the period and the scene at the ordination of the pastor.

"Meanwhile the Persia Mission proper was being carried on at Julfa by Dr. Bruce and Dr. Hoernle : the Persian services, the Armenian Schools, the Medical Mission, and Bruce's scripture translations, going on steadily. In 1883, Bishop French of Lahore, on his way to England, travelled across Persia, armed with a commission from the Bishop of London to perform episcopal functions there. He confirmed sixtyseven members of Bruce's congregation and ordained for them a pastor from amongst themselves, an Armenian, the Rev. Mnatsaken George. This was the first Anglican confirmation and ordination in Persia, and excited much interest among both the Armenians and the Persians"

The Bishop wrote

"It was a scene and service I can never forget while memory lasts. I preached in Persian for nearly an hour, and fair facility and fluency were given me, thank God The little gallery was quite full, and all steady throughout. I took for text, 'In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of Christ . . by the Holy Ghost ; by love unfeigned by the word of truth—by the power of God',—dwelling on these three as the three great tests or touchstones of the Holy Ghost's witness to, and approval of, the ministers of Christ .. Minas, the old catechist (he must be 49 or 50 years old), with grey hairs here and there upon him behaved with simple, quiet dignity, which it was a pleasure to look on He read the gospel and

gave the cup to the last row of communicants. The singing was delightful in the Armenian tongue. Among the hymns were, 'The Church's one foundation', and 'Just as I am'. One's heart does yearn over these dear people."

Rev. George Mnatsakan was a devoted worker and his family looked after the boys of the orphanage. In the words of Mr. Arathoon, "the old man was a wonderful person and looked after us as his own children".

The quick successive promotions in a few years had brought up young Arathoon to the third form. By now he could read and write in three languages, Armenian, Persian and English.

About this time (1890) Mr. A. H. Crete, a businessman having a well established firm of Saddlers and Upholsters in Cawnpore in India, visited New Julfa, his native town, and wished to take some boys to work in his factory in India. Several boys, including young Arathoon, agreed to go: he without question as to conditions, remuneration or anything else.

With much heartache and shedding of tears the lad parted from his mother, his two young brothers and his sister, and under the care of Hovaness Gooloomi and in company with Nicholas Boldy, Marcar Boldy, Pogose Balasani and Carapiet Jambori, set off on the long journey to India.

Travel was mainly by mule caravan of about 30 strong As luck would have it the young traveller was given a mare to ride upon According to him it was a pitiful sight to see the number of sores on the mare's back, patches of raw red showing under the saddle when it was taken off at the end of a day's journey. Owing to the heat of the day, caravans started at 2 00 a.m. and travelled till about noon, by which time the beasts were tired and the sun scorching hot. Choosing a cool spot under a spreading tree or a sheltering rock, the caravan would dismount and the travellers, after cooking a meal, would eat with relish and rest till midnight, when the day's routine would begin anew. Mules would be loaded and the journey continued.

In the days that our traveller set out, the only route to India was by way of Shiraz and Bushire (Abu Shahar), an important seaport of Persia, where steamers to India would call for mercandise and bring European goods transhipped from Bombay. The town was a flourishing place till the opening of the Mohamerah route just above the present Abadan, of oil refinery fame

It is not uncommon on such journeys for riders to fall asleep in the saddle, and sleep is fraught with danger. One night our traveller was sleepy and had the misfortune to tumble off the saddle and find himself sprawling in the dust. The mare, an intelligent animal, stood by and would not move without its charge. Finding the leader of the caravan at a standstill the other mules also

stopped. This drew the attention of the muleteers who soon came to the lad's rescue.

It was a tedious journey with progress only some 20 to 25 miles a day. The stop-overs sometimes took a day or more depending on favourable business done by the muleteers with the inhabitants of the villages through which they passed. So it took them 15 days to reach Shiraz—famous for its wines and nightingales. Here a small colony of resident Armenians had a church of their own and were in business in many small trades. As Arathoon had never left his own town where only Armenians dwelt and where the women of the community went about openly without 'chadurs' or an overall covering, the young traveller and his companions having taken their abode in the Church compound found what they thought to be Persian women in black 'chadurs' come to the Church gate, reverently kiss the frame and pass by. This appeared most remarkable to the observant young boy until he found the reverent women-folk to be Armenian women After a stay of a few days in Shiraz they set out for Bushire, and on the way passed through Borazgun, a village nestled at the foothills from where a flat stretch of land sprawls 40 miles to Bushire. As there were a few Armenians in Borazgun, stay was inevitable—so it took the caravan another 15 days to reach Bushire from Shiraz. On arrival at Bushire they all headed, as Armenians invariably do, for the Church where rooms are generally available for travellers. Here on the arrival of a caravan, people called to visit, get news

of relatives in Julfa and generally to gossip after the day's work was done and the bazars were closed.

The arrival of a ship in port—and the vessel drops anchor some 3 miles away—is a signal for feverish activity. It is all one hectic rush for the ship, bedlam breaks loose, confusion colours the cargo which moves in contraflow, there is shouting, bargaining, jostling and jesting

The question of obtaining a passage on board was, in those days, entirely dependent on the good nature of the Captain. No previous booking being possible, our young traveller was sent to the boat by an influential Armenian in Bushire, Mr. Gulzad, with a permit of some kind representing a passport and presumably some money for his being accepted as a 'deck passenger.' The young lad thinking that the head man of the crew of the dingy carrying him to meet the steamer was the Captain, handed him his 'papers' and went on board As there were no strict regulations in regard to emigrants, no questions were asked. The fare was paid and he was a passenger travelling on deck, as many do even today. His meagre luggage served as his bedding, his pillow and all

Like most deck passengers he slept on the hatch after this was covered, here he was quite safe from the hosepipes of the deck khalasis who did not discriminate between sleeping men and goods and chattels, and washed whatever came in their way. Perched on the top of the hatch with several others in a space of about 12 ft.

square, sleep was peaceful till daybreak. Being a healthy boy, fresh from the highlands of Persia, with red cheeks and sparkling eyes, many took a liking to him, especially as he knew a few words of English—the result of the work of the Church Missionary Society's schooling. His best friend, however, was a young Persian who had relatives in Bombay. Able to speak Persian fluently and, it must be mentioned, all alone, (his companions having secured an earlier boat), he considered it wise to keep in company with one who could easily understand his language. The sea is generally calm at that time of the year—late October—so the young traveller did not experience any incident of importance until he reached Bombay. The ship arrived at port late in the evening and by the time they disembarked it was night. His young Persian companion took him to his father's house where he spent the night. In relating the story to me Mr. Arathoon said he wished he could locate this friend whom he would repay a thousand times for the hospitality shown him that night.

Next morning our young gentleman hired a phaeton and in bold English announced "Armenian Church." The Armenian Church in Bombay is situated at 83, Meadows Street, a business quarter of the town There being many Armenians in the city, the Armenian Church was a well-known spot. Without difficulty he reached the Church where, in rooms allotted for travellers, he lived until he left for Cawnpore.

It must be mentioned that as his guides and companions had left Bushire before him and as he was

short of money, he was at the end of his tether. He sought the help of the priest who in turn approached a certain gentleman—but of no avail, Fortunately the Persian merchant gave him enough money to enable him to reach Cawnpore.

CHAPTER II

ARRIVAL AT CAWNPORE

Arriving in Cawnpore at night and not knowing the language, he secured an ekka-man who expected to take him to the address written on an envelope. After hours of searching for the address given by Mr. A. H. Crete, the ekka-man, knowing no English failed to find the place and invited the young man to his 'bustee' for the night. Next morning he ferreted infòrmation as to the site of the factory where he was to work. Mr. Arathoon, while relating his story was so taken up with the difficulties he had encountered that he did not mention how greateful he was to the kindly ekka-man for his care, till after his story ended I am sure he breathed a sigh of relief as soon as he met people who spoke his native tongue and found himself amongst Armenians once again

Mr. George Crete, one of the brothers of A. H. Crete, took him in and brought him to Mr. P H. Crete, the third brother, of Crete Brothers, Cawnpore. He was assigned to a room which was actually a part of the factory. He boarded with the Crete brothers and received no pay from the time he joined till 1893, that is for 3 years. Such hardships, heroically endured, taught young Arathoon a great deal. It sharpened his determination to break off the yoke one day, and strike out for himself

After three years the princely sum of Rs 10/- was granted as a monthly emolument. In his own words Mr. Arathoon "would put the amount in the Post Office Savings Bank Account". He proudly produced for me the Savings Bank Book which still shows Rs. 10-15-3 in the year 1954/55 in deposit and is annually sent to the Post Office for collection of interest. He has shown this book to his daughters as evidence of how he looked after the first few rupees he earned at the age of 18

I must mention here the nature ot his work in the factory. He was a general supervisor of labour and it was his business to open and close the factory doors, and later, to keep an account of all that went out of the factory. Out of working hours, which were from 7.00 a m. untill 6 00 or 7.00 p.m , he was often called to help in the housework especially when people came over. He related a story in which his simplicity was apparent. He was called upon one evening to turn the handle of a machine which appeared to be a wooden barrel with a metal cylinder in the centre, packed with ice all round. This he turned for a good three quarters of an hour or so and was abruptly told that that would do and that he could go to his quarters. Years after, when he came to Calcutta, he then came to know the mystery of the machine. He discoverd he had been preparing ice cream for the guests and had not even known what were the contents of the cylinder.

Arathoon, now about 18 years of age, joined the local volunteers, this gave him an extra outfit including

boots, etc. When in his uniform he felt very proud and was glad to be out of his usual old clothes

About the year 1893 Mr A H. Crete returned from New Julfa where he had proceeded and came on the scene again in Cawnpore. For some reason there arose differences between him and P. H. Crete resulting in the latter breaking away from the firm. After a settlement was reached both P. H. and George Crete left Cawnpore. At this juncture young Arathoon's salary was raised to Rs. 30/- per month but now he had to provide his own board out of the amount.

Promptly the young man arranged with some local family and paid them Rs. 20/- a month for his board, retaining Rs 10/- out of which he saved as much as he could.

The ill feeling between the Crete brothers had a serious repercussion on Arathoon, for after a short time Mr. A. H. Crete in a fit of anger sacked the lad on the spot. Thus ended his services with Messrs. Crete Brothers in June 1894. Young Arathoon immediately took up lodgings with the family with whom he had been boarding and went in search of employment.

To Cretes' place used to come one Mr. Gregory Carapiet, a relative of the Gulzads in Bushire. Mr. Carapiet had a Shellac manufacturing factory in Mirzapur, some 50 miles from Allahabad His factory was established in 1883 and he was the sole proprietor.

There were other Armenians in Mirzapur who were engaged in the Shellac business. These were Andreas Mackertich, Hacob Khalantharian and Galstaun Nahapiet.

In the early days Shellac was produced mainly for its dye—(Shellac Dye) qualities. The other products, however, were not wasted and were used in various forms for lacquering. The resinious portion of the Shellac in its refined state mixes well with colouring matter of bright hues. This mixture is formed into sticks, and wooden articles turned on primitive lathes are coloured brightly by holding the coloured Shellac stick against a fast revolving article and imparting to it highly glossy polish of varying hues. Generally sticks of different bright colours form these decorations or, sometimes, a single colour is used on spherical products such as a wooden ball.

Mr. Carapiet hearing of young Arathoon's dismissal, offered him a post in his factory because his own assistant, Hovsep Chanabandi, had tendered his resignation Arathoon accepted this offer and started on his new job in July 1894. From this date, the future Shellac producer entered upon his career as a beginner in the industry. His salary was then Rs. 50/- per month with board and lodging. Being new to this type of work, he was interested in every detail of production and soon came to know all the trade secrets. After being employed for about two years in the factory, it was reported that the two gumashtas, Commission Agents, of Mr. Carapiet, had quarrelled over their ill-gotten gains and one of them had murdered the

other—disposing of the body in a well on the premises. Mr. Carapiet being at a loss asked young Arathoon if he would go to the districts and buy Shellac for him on a commission basis. Undaunted by the posssible difficulties of having to live in huts in outlandish places where living conditions were difficult and where danger to life was always imminent, he accepted the job. He was sent to Jhalda where Shellac was cultivated.

It would interest my readers to know a little about Shellac and I could do no better than to reproduce extracts from the publication of the Indian Lac Research Institute's well known works by Dorothy Norris, M.SC., F.I.C., P. M. Glover, B SC. and R. W. Aldis, Ph.D., D.I C , 2nd Edition 1935, as an appendix at the end of this book These make very interesting reading.

I am indebted to the Institution for their kind permission to reproduce the information.

But to return to our young man. Used to hardships, thanks to Mr. George Crete, young Arathoon made a success of his job as purchasing agent, giving very good satisfaction to his employer. The end of the season brought him a goodly sum as his commission at 8 annas in the maund, which was gladly paid by Mr. Carapiet considering he had had a better deal from young Arathoon than from his former gumashtas. At this time Mr. Solomon Apcar was also employed by Mr. Carapiet. Young Arathoon had kept his eyes open during his outings in

the districts and had noticed that the Jhalda district was the finest for stick lac.

He worked for Mr. Carapiet till the year 1897 and suggested that a factory should be opened at Jhalda Mr. Carapiet being an old man and having his own factory in an established place was not inclined to move away, so the idea of starting a factory of his own was conceived in the mind of the young man.

By this time, his savings and commission totalled a fortune of Rs. 4000/- So in 1898, in the month of April Mr Arathoon bid good-bye to Mirzapur to set up his own factory in Jhalda taking men and materials from Mirzapur for starting his work

Such pioneer work, in an outlandish district, having to pay men go to a new place, required courage and determination, apart from tact and organising capacity.

But our young pioneer had learned the importance of being earnest on the stage of life and in the pages of experience. He was 23 but he was not frivolous, and he was not theoretical or technical. He was practical and he was a 'go-getter'. He had made up his mind to succeed and he entered, heart and soul, into the business – together with four thousand hard earned rupees. Half of this sum he initially invested in buying equipment and in meeting immediate expenses.

For processing, charcoal was essential, for packing the produce, boxes were necessary, and as there were no other factories or tradesmen to cut the timber for making charcoal or packing cases, everything had to be started from scratch. These difficulties, however, did not deter the young man. So he started and laid the foundation of his factory in a small way, and kept going, trusting in God and in the spark that energised his youth.



Mr. A. M. Arathoon 1901

CHAPTER III

JHALDA

Jhalda is situated about 450 miles from Mirzapur and is only 230 from Calcutta, the port from where all the produce from the Shellac manufacturing areas finds its way into foreign markets.

At the time of our story in 1897, the railway station for reaching Jhalda was Purulia, 30 miles from the present town of Jhalda, and the intervening distance lacked good roads as we know them now.

On arrival at Purulia station the traveller had to make arrangements with the owner of a 'push-push' to take him to his destination. Jhalda at this time consisted of about 70 to 100 huts with a population of about 2000 to 3000 souls. Other small hamlets nearby contributed to make the area populous. The huts comprising Jhalda were spread on either side of the road and one can imagine the consternation of the simple folk when 'invaders' headed by a young 'Saheb', Mr. Arathoon, marched with bag and baggage, implements, wooden boxes and other paraphernalia, sufficiently intricate for the simple not to understand.

Imagine the amount of jostling, nudging, murmuring, sulking and what not amongst the men and women who,

having a settled home and a daily routine in their native Mirzapur, had now to come away from their 'mulluk', following a young pioneer who did not know what the future held for him. His adventurous spirit, his youth, his imagination and his determination to strike out on his own having made them follow him into this new place

A great deal of tact and patience, not usually found in young men but happily abounding in young Arathoon, made him a leader and thus was started the nucleus of what in years to come should grow into a neat little industrial centre

A small hut with mud walls and thatched roof was the first home in which young Arathoon lived.

The sanitary arrangements were most primitive and food was mainly what could be prepared from the small variety available in the village. Cooking was the best that could be done by a man in Arathoon's following But the zest for his work, which went on 24 hours a day, did not leave any time for Arathoon to pick and choose or to be fussy. Plenty of milk, chappaties and chicken prepared in any form, roasted, boiled or stewed, sufficed for him.

In reply to my query as to the prices ruling at the time, I was given the following which came with a twinkle in his eye and which indicated that he was reminded of the 'good old days.'

Roast fowls	2 annas each.
Chicken	Half an anna each.
Milk (best)	18 to 20 seers for the rupee.
Rice	30 to 35 seers for the rupee.

Returning to our story, many days were spent in getting the small works into shape The purchasing of sticklac was mostly an outdoor job. Breaking and winnowing the broken mass to seperate the wood from the lac was also carried out in the open. Once this was done the Shellac had to be manufactured and stored in godowns under cover. Suitable huts were built in due course and within a short time work proceeded under the able and energetic guidance of the young man.

To provide the necessary charcoal for processing the Shellac and to obtain planks for Shellac boxes, a large forest was leased for 13 years. Life went on fairly well and local men and women were recruited, both to learn and to help the men from Mirzapur. Labour rates were as follows :—

Local coolies	Annas two per day
Local women	Anna and a half per day
Mirzapur Cook	Rs. 6/- per month
Mirzapur melters	Annas 9 for three men for one maund of seedlac.

Melters, for the manufacture of Shellac, consisting of a team of 3 men were paid, in Mirzapur, seven annas

for converting one maund of seedlac into Shellac, but Mr. Arathoon had to increase the rate by two annas per maund, to get the Mirzapur melters to come to Jhalda The present day, 1958 rate, is Rs 5-8-0 per maund for three men, nearly ten times more.

As time went on, especially after a fire had broken out in one hut, the thatched roofs, were replaced by locally made tiles, under instructions from the indefatigable young man. He even went so far as to deviate from the normal sizes of tiles used in Jhalda and, in order to minimise labour, ordered tiles to be made twice the length of those made formerly. The tiles were made by the local people and soon the hut in which Arathoon lived was roofed over with these, making the place more comfortable

Many of the older citizens of Calcutta will remember the 'punka' used before the advent of the electric fan. This most desirable instrument of comfort in those days consisted of a large sheet of fine matting with its borders taped with red cloth and with frills hanging at the lower edge this was attached to a neatly planed wooden beam about four inches in diameter and about eight to ten feet long, in keeping with the size of the room for which it was required. This contraption was hung from the ceiling by two or more cords with iron rings at each end. A rope attached at two points on the beam was carried over a brass pulley on the door lintel and pulled by a 'punka' puller. The easy movement

of the beam with the swaying of the mat attached to it resulted in a gentle current of the air, making the room delightfully cool compared with the outside temperature, which would reach anything up to 115 degrees fahrenheit in Jhalda.

Such an arrangement was rigged up for the young pioneer and life became more bearable , not to say that the thought of it being otherwise had ever entered his mind, so absorbed was he in his work

With the accumulation of manufactured goods, it became necessary to look out for markets where these could be sold. Calcutta was the centre where all the produce eventually found its way and it was, therefore, natural for the young man to send his goods to Calcutta. His former employer, Mr. Carapiet, who had retired to Calcutta invited Arathoon to visit him in the cold season of 1898. By this time Arathoon had turned over a considerable sum and felt himself as beginning to be well established—and this at the early age of 23.

One can well imagine the feelings of a young man in Mr. Arathoon's position. All alone, communing with himself and his Maker, unknown to many, yet confident within himself that he was achieving something—something that others had not attempted. Buoyant with hope, satisfied with the fruits of his one year's labour and hard toil, and with still greater hopes swelling in his chest, he visited the great city. He must

have been treading on air thinking of the amount his goods were worth, considering the turnover he had had during the first year of his venture.

I remember in my younger days when I had just started work. Whenever I happened to have a few rupees in my pocket and could touch them and jingle them quietly (in those days there were no rupee notes) I felt I could put out my chest and look anybody in the face, and naturally carried a cheerful countenance.

Such were perhaps his feelings as Mr Arathoon stopped at the house of Mrs. Tomlin at 32, Dhuram-tholla Street, the site of which is now occupied by a cinema, and asked for Mr Carapiet. Who should he see but a young girl, well built with beautiful blue eyes, golden hair, very fair, with tints of red on her checks. She told him that that was not the house, and directed him to the proper address at 1, Pretoria Street. The girl must have been about 12 years old, he thought.

By Jove, I would have jumped for joy to hear a soft voice after many a year since parting with my dear sisters and mother and after having gone through such a lot of hardships, as Mr. Arathoon had done, and many thoughts of the future might have sped through my mind, thoughts of happy days, happy home, happy children running about in open spaces and gardens in Jhalda. But Mr Arathoon was no different to any other young man of the time he lived in. He was reserved and

he was shy, and except for his watchful and alert eyes, his expression revealed no inner thoughts. As for the girl, she must have been too young to think of any future. With a courteous salutation Mr. Arathoon retired from the house to find the one to which he had been directed, the voice and the countenance of the young girl lingering in his mind. Finding Mr. Carapiet's house he concluded the visit for which he came.

Mr. Arathoon told me that within a year of his starting his own business he had nearly one lakh rupees worth of goods and cash to his credit.

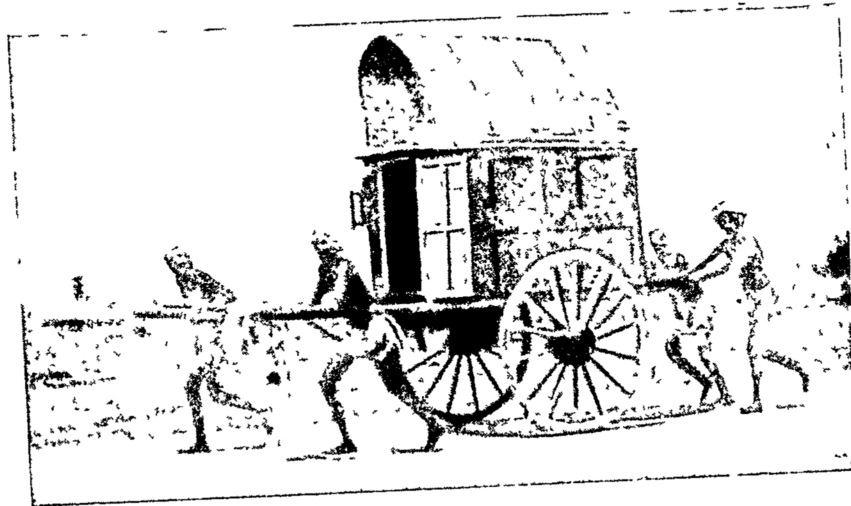
As business thrived he visited Calcutta more often, using the Howrah Station which in those days, he told me, consisted of only one platform covered over with a semi-circular roof. This and additions to this platform, I belive, are the present Howrah goods sheds, West of the large one on the riverside and situated south of the present station. During his visits he often called at the house of the parents of the girl he had first met.

Mr. Arathoon often carried away from Calcutta large sums of money for his purchases and to pay his men. Describing this part he said he would go to the Currency Office to exchange currency notes for cash. Cash would be paid to him in bags containing Rs. 2,000/- in silver which he would place in wooden boxes large enough to hold 2 bags each. These would then be taken to Howrah Station and booked to travel with the owner

in his compartment Sometimes, in later years, he would take as much as Rs. 60,000/- at a time. This rather alarmed me, knowing how money was snatched in broad daylight in Calcutta, and how sometimes even murder was committed in the bargain, for smaller sums than Rs. 60,000/-. I asked whether he had an escort or a guard on such occasions to which he replied, with his usual quiet smile, 'in those days there were no robbers' and 'Sahebs were greatly respected '

After reaching Purulia Railway Station, the boxes would be transported by 'push-push', a four wheeler cart with cover but no seats, pushed by four men with 2 extra men as reliefs ; and would reach Jhalda safely in 10 hours

During the intervening period between visits to Calcutta, if any money was to be paid out, a chit to any 'bania' in Purulia was sufficient and the payee would get his money. Such was the good name and the credit established in such a short time, in and around Jhalda and Purulia by our young pioneer.



The "Push Push"



Mr and Mrs Arathoon 1905

CHAPTER IV

MARRIAGE AND EUROPEAN TOUR

The intervening period between his arrival in Jhalda, in 1898 and 1904 was devoted to further improvement, addition and expansion to his factory. Business continuing to be prosperous, he was now able to keep an assistant who managed his factory which had started making what is commonly known as shellac and buttonlac, in addition to seedlac.

Mr. Arathoon was now well established (1904) and as a man of 29 years of age his thoughts were directed towards getting settled down. And who would not, if he was in Mr. Arathoon's place—now quite well-to-do, owner of a flourishing business and having in view the girl he first met, with whom he had kept up acquaintance ever since ?

The girl was now quite grown up and about 19 years of age. It was not surprising, therefore, that their engagement was announced in 1904. They were married in the Armenian Church in Calcutta on the 21st. of November 1905 by the late Rev. Carapiet Thoomikian. They spent their honeymoon in Calcutta in a house which Mr. Arathoon had rented earlier in 1905.

Of course, a visit to Jhalda would be one of the items

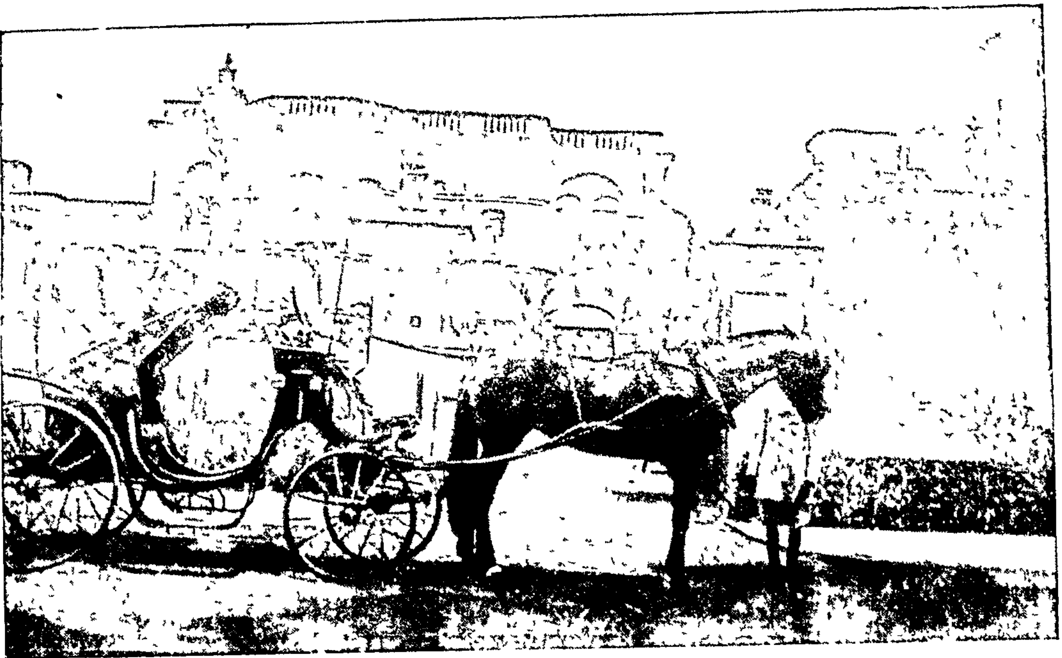
on the list of visits of the new bride and she was taken there to see the place.

By this time the mud hut had been replaced by a bungalow, but travelling was the same as before viz, from Calcutta to Purulia by train and from there to Jhalda by 'push-push'. Married life is a great change from the bachelor days of a man, and many great men owe their success to their wives' support and encouragement.

Our young man's marriage was a happy and harmonious one and Mrs. Arathoon entered upon her duties as the wife of a pioneer, with enthusiasm. She faced the hardships of travelling 30 miles in a 'push-push', she shared the anxieties when large sums were accompanying them to Jhalda, she put up with being lonely in a far off place. In the meanwhile business prospered

In 1908 on the 31st of May their first child was born to them—a girl whom they called Edith, and two and a half years later when Mr. and Mrs. Arathoon decided to visit Europe, the baby was left in the care of her good old granny.

Mr. and Mrs Arathoon's tour in Europe appears to have been very extensive according to a diary which Mr Arathoon has kept neatly and methodically, recording every day's outing during the tour.



House Phæton (1910)

It would therefore be worth mentioning some items from the diary

"30th March 1911 left Calcutta by "City of Paris" for Europe. River being in low tide anchored near Saugor that night."

"31st at 8 a m. still in Hooghly ; at 9-30 a. m. started sailing Ethel (Mrs. Arathoon) wrote a letter to mother at home. At 3-30 p. m. arrived at Sandheads. The Pilot got off to the Brig."

These were the days when the Gateway of India in Bombay was not in existence and most voyages to the U K were direct from Calcutta. In the diary I came across the fare from Calcutta to London and back. It is recorded that Rs. 2,592/- was paid to Thomas Cooks, Rs. 1,782/- for Calcutta-Marseilles and back and Rs. 810-0-0 for the tour in Europe.

Sunday Service on board is among the items recorded before reaching Colombo. On the 4th April after leaving Colombo, dancing and sports on board and the inevitable bets on the boats run in the previous 24 hours. This is interesting as a mileage as high as 347 is mentioned and Mr Arathoon won £1-3-0 having tied with another passenger. By the 15th, Suez was reached at 11-30 A M. where they remained anchored for the rest of the day and the steamer was delayed on account of "Sand-storm over the Canal."

After reaching Port Said the couple appear to have left the "City of Paris" because they went to Cairo, visited the Pyramids, the new town of Heleopolis and returned to Alexandria, where after another day's stay they sailed on the "Prinz Hunrich" for Italy.

The boat appears to have touched at Syracuse and Palermo and thence at Naples where they visited the ruins of Pompeii. Here again they left the boat and travelled by train to Rome, arriving there on the 25th April, where St Peter's Church, the Colosseum, St Pauls and other places of interest including an exhibition were seen.

On the first of May they witnessed a grand Labour Day in Rome and later visited the famous Villa d'Este. 'Grand Place' is Mr. Arathoon's remark in the diary.

Next Florence, Bologna and Venice. Like every patriotic Armenian, Mr. & Mrs. Arathoon must needs visit the Island of St. Lazaro, an Armenian cultural centre, where a brotherhood of Armenian Monks have been a beacon of light since 1749 on the then otherwise dark horizon of Armenian history and literature. Escaping from Turkish oppression the monks had fled from Constantinople and were received kindly by the Roman Catholic Pope who granted the Island of St. Lazaro to them on which they made a Monastery which exists to this day

After Venice, the couple toured Verona and then Innesbruck where some Churches were seen. We then find them in Salsberg. Vienna is the next place recorded where St. Stephen's Cathedral was visited on the 25th of May.

In Vienna other places of interest are mentioned including the Ronacher Theatre where an Armenian Ballerina was dancing. After Vienna, they toured Kalsbad, Dresden and then Berlin. Here they visited the Kaiser's summer palace at Postdam, the Crown Prince's palace and the Royal Stables.

After a 3 hour train journey they reached Leipzig. They also spent a few days at Frankfurt and Hamburg. Thence to Mayense, where Mr. Arathoon mentions that he took Gregory Arathoon and together they went boating.

Leaving Mayense they arrived at Brussels on the 4th July and visited the battlfield of Waterloo. Next Rotterdam and Amsterdam are toured with the usual rounds of the Cheese Factory, Marken via Edam, the Dutch girls and old-fashioned Dutch men. Then via the Hague and Hook of Holland they reached London by boat on the 18th of July.

Thus it had taken the couple 3½ months to reach London. Personally I think it was a very good itinerary and well thought out.

Mr and Mrs. Arathoon on arrival went to the Imperial Hotel in Russel Square and cabled their arrival. It appears from Mr. Arathoon's diary that after about 3 weeks' stay in London they started a tour of England, Scotland and Ireland returning to London on the 6th of September

During this tour they visited, Birmingham Manchester where there is an Armenian Church in Upper Brooke Street, the Windermere Lakes, Liverpool, then Edingburgh, Inverness, Aberdeen, Staffa and Iona. From there they started their return journey by a different route

They left Oban via Crinan Canal and reached Glasgow on the 22nd August. While in Glasgow they made it a point to visit Loch Katherene and Loch Lomond. From Glasgow they went to a place called Larne and by boat from there they reached Belfast in Nothern Ireland. Here they visited the Giants Causeway and returned to Belfast. Next they went to Dublin and visited a convent and the village of Howth, which place Mr Arathoon described in his diary as having pretty scenery looking down from the top of the hill. Next place called at was Killarney. Here he said "it was a small place with 5600 inhabitants and 88 liquor shops" From here, by way of Glengarriff, they reached Cork staying at Windsor Hotel. They visited Queenstown with its "magnifiicient harbour". In Queenstown they met an Armenian, Haruthiun Babmetzian, a confectioner who specialised in making Turkish Delight for the Irish

From Cork they sailed for London. During their stay they saw Shakespeare's play Romeo & Juliet, and spent some days shopping. In Gamadges they met Tom Stephen who was writing a P. C. to be taken by Aerial Post. They also visited Mr and Mrs. T. M. Thaddeus and met a number of other Armenians in Mr. Thaddeus' residence. Date 10-9-1911. It must be mentioned that there was no Armenian Church in London at the time of Mr. and Mrs. Arathoon's visit.

After another stay of nearly 3 weeks in London Mr and Mrs Arathoon prepared for their return journey to India via. the Continent. This time by way of Paris as we shall see shortly.

Leaving London on the 27th September by way of Newhaven and Dieppe they arrived in Paris the next day. Here Mr. Arathoon described the Paris Bourse as a very noisy place, but praised the Boulevards, Notre Dame, the Louvre and other places of interest. Mr Arathoon did not say anything about the Armenian Church in Paris which was in existence at the time of their visit. While in Paris they attended the Chantilly Races, mentioned in his diary as a grand race, second to the Grand Prix. Shopping of course could not be avoided, the lure of the Parisian shops being inescapable.

From Paris they proceeded to Lausanne, in Switzerland, and then to Geneva , from Geneva to Interlaken and on visiting the Greendelwald Glacier Mr. Arathoon's remark

was "very interesting". From here by boat to Brienz, then to Lucerne and next to Como which Mr. Arathoon described as the "prettiest place in Italy."

Milan was reached on the 24th October where the Deomo was visited ; this he said 'is one of the best Churches in the World." Picture galleries and other places were visited incluing a cemetry. After Milan, Turin, Genoa, Menton, then Monte Carlo.

Mr. Arathoon although not given to gambling needs must visit the Casino and see people at the tables He did not say whether he laid a wager or lost any money. I bet he watched and lost nothing. Mr and Mrs. Arathoon next went to Nice from Monte Carlo and thence to Marseilles. In Nice they visited and enjoyed the beauty of the beaches Weather being bad, they were kept indoors for two days.

When in Marseilles they visited the Notre Dame on the top of the hill above the harbour. The usual rounds at the shops brought their Continental tour to an end on the 15th of November. They sailed on the S. S 'Prinz Leopolds' for Alexandria

Alternative good and rough weather were experienced in the Mediterranean and they reached Alexandria on the 19th, where they disembarked and stayed for 2 days visiting Armenian Churches and Schools. By train they went to Cairo and again visited the Pyramids and the

Sphinx. The Great Mosque called "Cedetal" and museums were revisited. They then left Cairo for Port Said by train and embarked on S. S. 'City of Athens' for Calcutta.

The usual sports, fancy dress ball and Bridge Tournament with the final prize distribution was recorded in detail in Mr. Arathoon's dairy, not forgetting the run of the boat with a maximum of 305 miles. Mrs. Arathoon winning the "fixing the Pig" and Mr. Arathoon the Bridge Tournament.

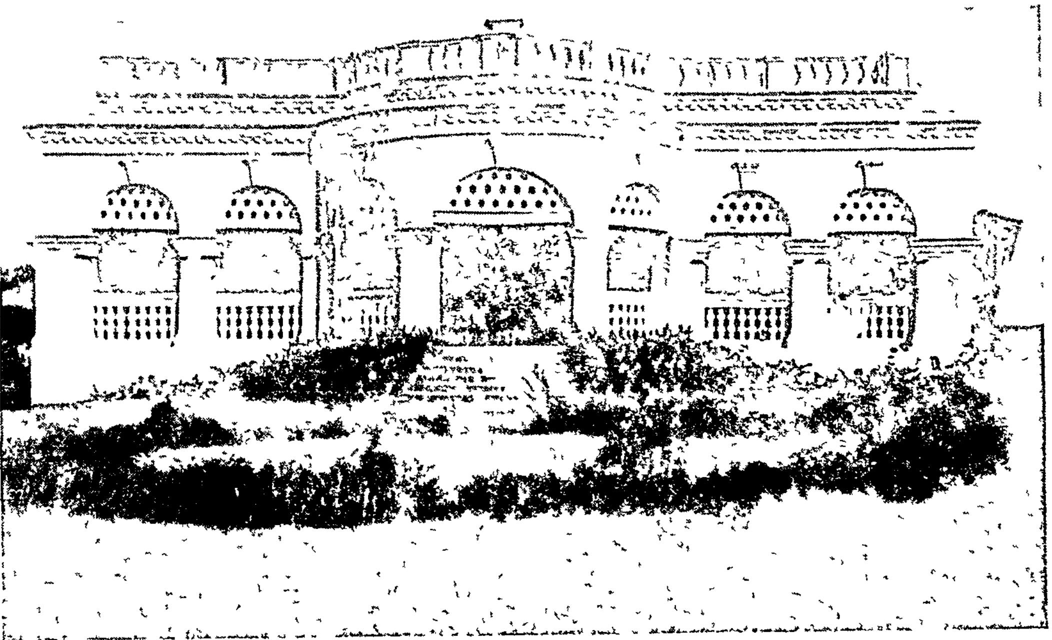
Thus they arrived back in Calcutta on the 10th December, 1911, having been away 8½ months after a most interesting holiday.

During his European tour, Mr. Arathoon's factory had been managed by his Factory Manager Mr. H. C Arakiel, who worked with him from 1909.

On his return we find Mr. Arathoon almost permanently settled in Calcutta, having his office at 57, Radha Bazar Street, where, on the first floor, were situated the offices of other Armenian merchants, Mr. J. C. Galstaun, Mr. P. H. Crete, Mr. Bisogomoff an Armenian from the Caucasus, Mr. S. J. Apcar and others.

In a central hall worked all the assistants, each keeping the records of his particular master and around the hall, in rooms, the masters had their offices.

When I first saw Mr. Arathoon, in 1910 he had a roll-top table near a window at the far corner of the large hall where it was well lit and airy. As he spent some of his time in Jhalda, this arrangement was suitable and his friends dealt with business in his absence, since the others were also in the shellac trade, apart from their specialities, such as coal by Mr. P. H. Crete and landed property and zamindary by Mr. J. C. Galstaun.



Mr Arathoon's House at Murhu

CHAPTER V

MECHANISATION AND PROGRESS

Mr. Arathoon's European tour, or the development of industry in Calcutta where there are many Engineering works, or perhaps both, had given him an idea that his factory should be brought up to date with the installation of labour saving machinery, specially for preparing timber for boxes in which Shellac was shipped in those days for crushing sticklac and for winnowing the resulting material.

For this purpose Mr. Arathoon purchased a Richmond and Chandler corn crushing machine hoping that this would do for sticklac crushing. He also purchased a portable steam engine from Messrs. Marshall and Sons.

It must be mentioned that as Mr. Arathoon was not an engineer he could not suggest which machines were most suitable for his purpose, and Engineering Firms had not yet had access to the Shellac industry to study and design machinery suitable for the various stages in the process of manufacturing Shellac. It is therefore apparent that Mr. Arathoon also pioneered the mechanisation of crushing and washing sticklac. But the various machines which were installed were not adequate, so

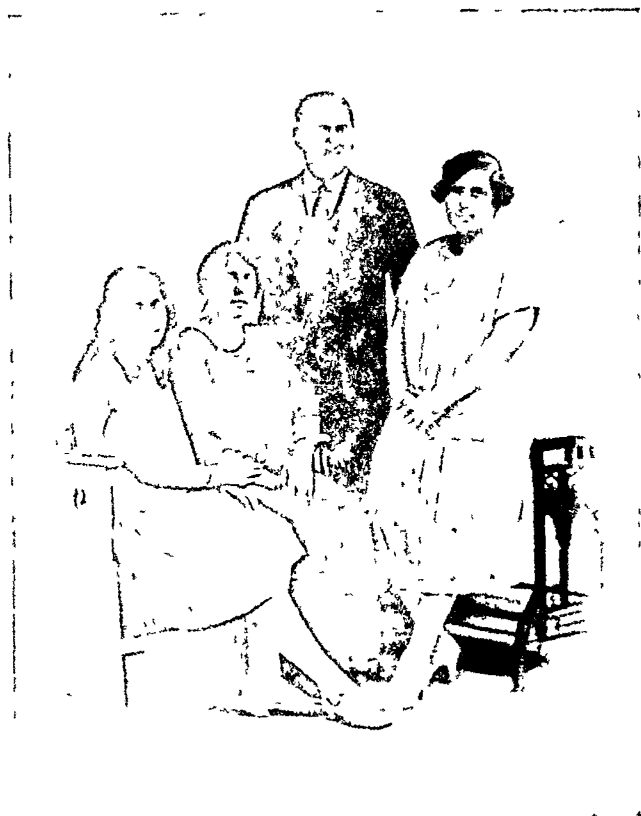
an additional crusher of a heavier type was ordered and a disintegrator added, together with a Shellac washing machine, the essential idea of which was first given by Mr Arathoon to Messrs. Burn & Co. Ltd. Howrah, who manufactured suitable machinery Along with the installation of machines it was necessary to purchase a horizontal Boiler 6′ dia. × 30′ long from Marshall & Sons and a steam Engine from Jessop & Co., Ltd. Necessary wall brackets, line shaft, bearings etc. were purchased and installed chiefly under his supervision.

Although he is not an Engineer, the construction of the building to house the machinery, the walls to carry the lineshaft brackets were designed by Mr. Arathoon and the fixing and aligning of these were carried out without the help of a trained technician.

The brick chimney for the boiler was the only item where the help of an Engineer friend, Mr. G. M. Gregory M I C. E was sought Bricks for the work were made locally, (except firebricks for the chimney)

As a matter of interest, I asked what prices he had paid for the various items. He could not recall prices though he did remember that the boiler had cost six or seven thousand rupees.

The railway had by the beginning of 1908 been extended to Jhalda and it was quite easy for equipment to reach Jhalda by rail.



Mr. & Mrs. Arathoon and family
1926

After completing the installation and working the factory by steam power Mr. Arathoon began to consider constructing a modern building where he, his family and his assistants could live in comfort. So in 1918, he built his house in Jhalda. A visit to the house would make one feel that one is in a house in the heart of Calcutta.

It would be quite pertinent if the reader asked whether other factories had by now sprung up in Jhalda The answer would be in the affirmative. Finding that the place was slowly developing into a Shellac manufacturing centre, others too had established factories in Jhalda. The following are the names of some of the owners of factories, and almost all of them were Armenians.

Mr M. C. Gregory
Mr. S. J. Apcar
Mr Joe Emin
Mr. J S Creet
There were also a couple of factories owned by Indian proprietors

Here it may be mentioned that Armenians, throughout their history of over 300 years in India, have from time to time held the monopoly of several industries, but with the subtle process of time they have had to give way in the face of vigorous competition.

Armenians, once had the beetal leaf trade in their hands in Bengal. In Bihar they monopolised the Indigo plantations until synthetic dyes ousted them (& others)

out of business. In Dacca they held the Jute trade. Jhalda was almost exclusively an Armenian Colony and only Armenian factories flourished until lately. Mr Arathoon's adventurous spirit still inspired him, and in order to tap further sources where Shellac could be purchased and manufactured cheaply, he branched out to another place in the neighbourhood where, in 1922, he opened a factory. This was in Murhu which is 75 miles from Jhalda and 30 miles from Ranchi on the road from Ranchi to Chakradharpur, which, in its turn, is 45 miles further west of Murhu. In Murhu, the pioneer repeated his earlier work in Jhalda and with added experience and his resources in Jhalda on which to fall back, the building of the factory and house here was not so difficult By this time the motor car had established itself over the "push-push" and having far more money than the original Rs 4,000/- with which he first came to Jhalda, the factory and the house took shape quickly.

For the house in Murhu nothing was spared to make the place comfortable for those who would occupy it. A beautiful garden was also laid out around the house. The factory was on one side of the road and the house on the other.

In Murhu, close to his house—perhaps a mile away—there is a S. P G Mission They were only too pleased to see the place growing, and Mr & Mrs. Arathoon soon became helpful neighbours to the inmates of the Mission.

CHAPTER VI

CHILDREN'S EDUCATION AND HELPING A FRIEND

On the 14th November, 1912, Mr. & Mrs. Arathoon were blessed with a second daughter whom they named Vera. Vera is an exceptionally charming girl, with deep blue eyes, tall, vivacious, and a very pleasant conversationalist. I had seen Vera as a girl but not since her marriage until I met her again at the Golden Jubilee of her parents' wedding.

The close resemblance of Vera to her mother is very striking and one can very well imagine how the mother looked when she was young. Mr. Arathoon's choice of his bride many years before must certainly have been an enviable one.

The early education of the girls was in Calcutta where they attended the Loretto House in Middleton Row. They were later educated in England where Edith went to Bedford College and took her B.Sc. degree. Vera attended Roedean School in Brighton, and did the Senior Cambridge Examination with French language as a compulsory subject. After her Schooling Vera went to Paris for two years for finishing her education in Music, Singing, etc. During their stay in England frequent visits to the Continent, specially to Switzerland

in the Summer, widened their education and sporting activities.

Mrs. Arathoon, of course, had to divide her time between her children and her husband, spending the summers in Europe and the winters in Calcutta.

It does not take girls long to grow up and marry and it was not long before Edith married Mr. G. N. Arratoon (no blood relation of Mr. Arathoon) on the 17th December, 1940 at the Armenian Church, and Vera married Mr E. E. Corstorphine, a Scottish gentleman, at the St. John's Church on the 9th September, 1943.

Mr. & Mrs. Arathoon now have two grandchildren, both boys, one by each daughter Each time I visited the old couple, they were sure to speak of one or the other, doting over them as any grandma and grandpa would.

Although we have digressed from the main theme of the narrative, yet the reader will agree that the family has its due place in such a story as this, and we should be glad to get glimpses of them from time to time as the story proceeds

I shall now deal with Mr Arathoon's contribution to the Shellac Industry where his long experience in manufacture and his intimate knowledge of foreign markets as a shipper of Shelllac has been found very



Mr. A. M. Arathoon
An Industrial Commission Witness
1917

helpful to the Shellac Industry and the Government.

As far back as 1916 an Industrial Commission was set up under the Chairmanship of Sir Thomas Holland to go into the question of ways and means to further develop the Shellac industry. For this purpose individuals from the industry were called for necessary information Mr. Arathoon as a representative of the industry was called upon to testify, and in the issue of 5th April, 1917, of the 'COMMERCE', a well-known Calcutta weekly, under the caption of its 'Portrait Gallery', Mr Arathoon's photograph appeared, which I have taken the liberty to reproduce, together with the newspaper account as follows.

'AN INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION WITNESS'

'Mr. A. M. Arathoon of Manbhoom came to India in 1890. He joined shellac in Mirzapur in 1894, then the only centre of the shellac industry While engaged in purchasing sticklac (crude lac) in the lac districts he visited Jhalda in Manbhoom, and realising that the place might become a great centre he established a factory there despite many difficulties, chiefly in connection with skilled labourers, whom he had to import from Mirzapur. In course of time he managed to teach local labourers the work, and he thus taught himself to be dependent on local labour only. Mr. Arathoon might justly claim to be the pioneer in shellac manufacturing in Jhalda, for it was through his enterprise that Jhalda, previously an

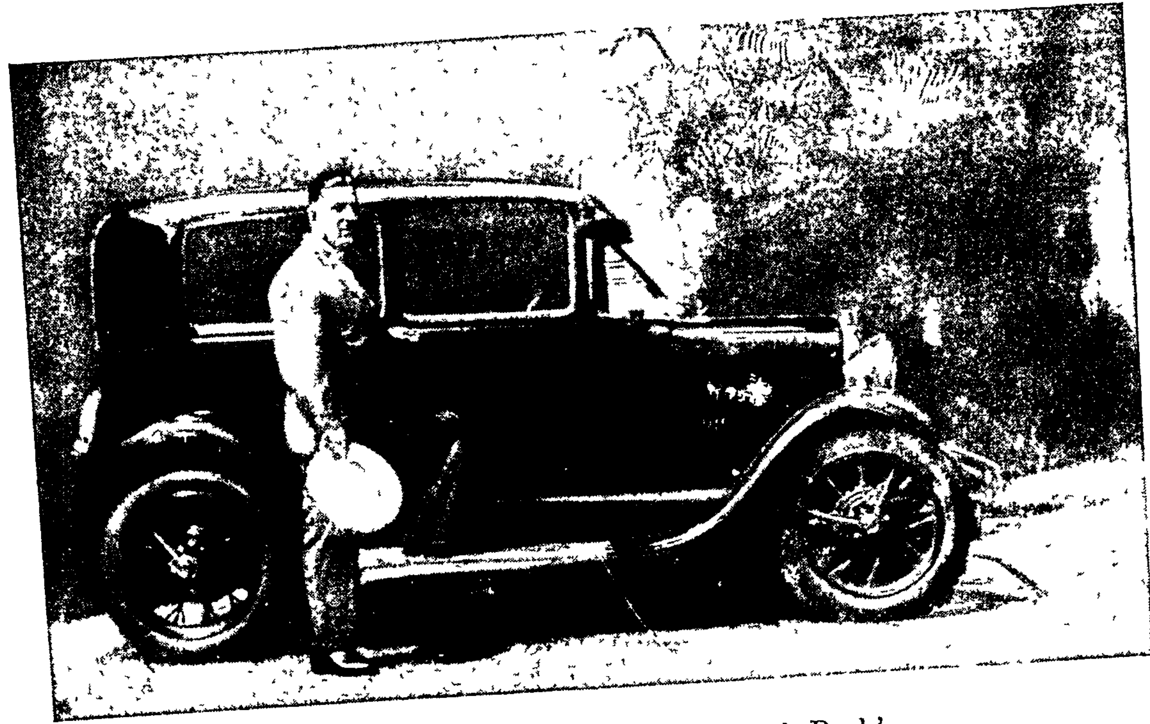
unknown village, twenty-eight miles from the nearest railway, has now become next to Mirzapur, the most important centre of the shellac industry. Other factories are increasing yearly in this neighbourhood. The original factory is one of the largest of its kind in India '

The activities of this well-known body benefited the industry considerably. I need not dwell on that except to say that Mr. Arathoon's wide experience was found very useful to the Commission.

In 1921 a Committee called the Lindsay- Harlow Committee furthered the findings of the 1916 Industrial Commission The move to rationalise the Shellac Industry had started and slowly yet surely a body was in the process of formation to help the Industry on.

Thus it was that in 1931 the Indian Lac Cess Committee was formed as a result of whose activities and perseverance the Indian Research Institute was established, with its present head quarters in Nańkum near Ranchi, at the very hub of the Lac producing area around the Chota Nagpur hills This Committee is now a statutory body, under the Government of India, Ministry of Agriculture.

I have tried to find a short history of the Indian Lac Cess Committee but have only succeeded in obtaining the above information. I feel sure a brief account of the activities of this important body would be very



The Motor Car replaced the 'Push Push'
1925.

welcome information and useful record for the future.

I may add that the Committee is still very active and in celebration of its Silver Jubilee held an exhibition in Calcutta during the early part of 1957 where a number of interesting exhibits made from Shellac were on view.

Now, going back to our story—the intervening years between 1914 and 1926 record nothing striking Business went on as usual until the war (1914-18). After the war there was a period of prosperity till about the year 1927, when signs of an oncoming trade depression set in with results already known to many.

It was, however, in the beginning of 1927, a memorable year in the financial history of Calcutta, when it was the unfortunate experience of Mr. J. C. Galstaun, once a Merchant Prince of Calcutta and a prominent personality on the Calcutta Race Course, to be called upon to liquidate his indebtedness to his creditors. The amount involved was many lakhs of rupees in ready cash.

Mr. Galstaun owned many valuable properties in Calcutta including Galstaun Mansions (now Queens Mansion), Galstaun Park in Lower Circular Road, right opposite Camac Street, quite a few houses in Elgin Road, Bishop LeFroy Road and properties in several other parts of Calcutta. The value of these properties,

even in those days, would be close on to a crore of rupees

When the time came for payment in Court, Mr. Galstaun asked a few close friends to help him.

Among his many friends were Mr A. Stephen of the Grand Hotel, of which he was the sole proprietor, Mr. C L Phillips, once known as the Coal King because he owned a number of coal mines in the Jharia coal fields, but at the time of our story he had retired and lived in Alipore , Mr. A T. Crete similarly well placed in coal, and Mr A M Arathoon who, as the reader will recall, was an associate of Mr. J. C Galstaun in Shellac

The amount involved was over 40 lakhs of rupees Mr. Stephen undertook to pay the amount against the security of Mr. Galstaun's properties, but he required three persons to guarantee six lachs each.

It was indeed a great act of friendship for four friends to come forward and help a compatriot to the extent of an amount which compared with its purchasing power of the present time (1958) would be equal to over a crore and a half of rupees.

As sensational as the loan was, it was also a severe blow to all the contributors one way or another

But they saved their friend !



Off for his Morning Walk

CHAPTER VII

SOCIAL WORK

Apart from his business activities Mr Arathoon has been intimately associated with Social work for his (the Armenian) Community in Calcutta, where this small community has a boys and a girls school besides two churches and a chapel

The boys school is known as The Armenian College and Philanthropic Academy. Mr. Arathoon's name appears as a Member of this Institution since the year 1909 when he was elected as one of the three Managers whose duty it was to take care of the affairs of the College in respect to Finance and Maintenance of the aims and objects of the Founders. The College records show that he has held the post of Manager for 16 years off and on. Mr. Arathoon was fortunate to be one of the Managers during the year in which The College Centenary celebrations took place, viz. in 1921. I came across the following as "concluding remarks" of the Managers annual report dated 10th April, 1921, signed by Mr. M. Mackertich and Mr. A. M. Arathoon

"One hundred years have faded into the past since the Institution saw its humble beginnings in a small house over against our venerated Church (2, Armenian

Street). As we peer down the corridors of Time, we discern how it has been a living memorial to the pious and benevolent Founders, a national school from out whose gates scores of our brave and enterprising young men, in generation after generation, have stepped out into the world, braced for the conflict of life Manfully and nobly have many of them carved their way to success, even to affluence and renown. How many there are today to whom The Armenian College and Philanthropic Academy has been the foundation stone of their prosperity, the sanctuary hallowed by memories of boyhood, the spot blessed in old age Thus the opening of a new century may well give us courage and inspire us reverently to thank the Almighty God that He has led us by the way which we have journeyed To Him we lift up our hearts and to Him do we chant our praise in gratitude for the bright prospects with which we step forward into the future that lies before our beloved College But let us gird ourselves for the great work that is before us It is a great work indeed and a great effort will be needed to accomplish it "

"New occassions teach new duties ,
Time makes ancient good uncouth ,
They must upward still, and onward,
Who would keep abreast of Truth."

It was during Mr Arathoon's managership in 1930 that a beautiful covered swiming pool was built (complete



Mrs. Arathoon giving away the Prizes
Armenian College Sports 1925



Mr. A M. Aıathoon and Vera with friends
at the Armenian College and Davidian Girls' School Sports
1956

with a tube well to supply water for the pool,) by the generosity of Mr. P. H. Crete an ex-pupil of the College. Mr. Arathoon, the reader will recall, had long before been associated with Mr. P. H. Crete in Cownpore and later in the same office when Mr. Arathoon had become a Shellac manufacturer. It was mainly by the advice and gentle persuasion of Mr. Arathoon that the proposed gift of a cash amount was diverted to the construction of the Swimming Pool, which has always since, been a source of pleasure and health for the boys of the College, the girls of the Davidian Girls' School and the younger members of the Armenian Community in Calcutta.

Although Mr. Arathoon has not had the opportunity of playing football, hockey or cricket he has always been very keen on all forms of Sport. He played tennis for many years, and was fond of swimming. On sevaral occassions he has presided at the Armenian College Annual Sports Meeting, where Mrs. Arathoon has given away the prizes.

Mr. Arathoon was also a member of the Armenian Club, established 75 years ago, with its club premises at Queens Mansion, Calcutta

Mr Arathoon's social activities have not been confined to the College. He has been on the Committee for management of the affairs of the Armenian Churches in Calcutta, Chinsurah and Saidabad since 1910 and has

been a member of this Committee for 30 years, during which time he has been a Warden off and on for 18 years.

During the war years of the first World War it fell to Mr Arathoon and his colleagues at the time, to raise funds for refugees of the war in the middle-east and Turkey. Many thousands of rupees were collected and sent to the various bodies caring for the destitutes.

At a dinner celebrating the third anniversary of the independence of Armenia in 1921, a speech had been made by Mr. Arathoon in connection with which Mr. Herbert A Stark, a well known figure in Anglo-Indian educational circles and, later, a member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly, wrote as follows to the Editor of the Statesman making reference to Mr. Arathoon's speech .

THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

To The Editor of "The Statesman"

Sir,

The inauguration in Calcutta of an annual dinner to celebrate the restoration to Armenia of national life, will gratify those who are familiar with the vicissitudes that compose the history of that ancient land Mr A. M. Arathoon, in his graceful speech at the recent dinner, made reference to the past and present benefits which his community have derived from their connection



Ready for Tennis

with the British nation. He might well have gone further, and said that the benefits have been mutual, for the advantages have not been only on one side.

In the Middle Ages the armies of Armenia took part in the Crusades, and fought side by side with the forces of Richard Cœur-de-Leon at the siege of Acre. "No nation and no people," wrote Pope Gregory XIII in his Papal Bull, "Ecclesia Romana" (1384) "were so prompt and so full of zeal as the Armenians to lend their aid, whether it was in men, in horses, provisions, or in counsel With all their forces and with the gratest gallantry and fidelity they came to the aid of the Christians in their Holy Wars" The fall of Acre in the reign of King Edward I was however, the signal for her enemies to wreak their vegenance on Armenia ; and England and France were too deep in warfare to render Armenia any assistance. In the end Armenia fell a prey to her insatiable foes An allegorical picture, as expressive as it is pathetic, by an eminent Armenian painter whose name at the present moment I fail to recall, epitomises the hapless subsequent condition of the country. A beautiful but grief-stricken women sits recumbent against a prostrate cross, gazing mournfully upon the ruins of a town. Around her lie in scattered confusion mutilated statuary, fragments of books, shreds of pictures, and broken instruments of music.

Driven from their motherland by the excesses of tyrants who were cruel by deliberation, a handful of

Armenians migrated to India. To their descendants must be attributed much of the success that attended the enterprise of the pioneers of the East India Company on these shores. As interpreters of the Englishman and his business, as explorers for the commodities in which the Company desired to trade, as intermediaries and brokers in the market-places; and as attachés to British ambassadors at the Moghul Court, they did signal service Mr Arathoon and Mr. Mesrob Seth, with a delicacy which was perhaps appropriate to the occasion, refrained from making allusion to the benefits which the English have derived from their Armenian connection—for instance, how the grant of the villages of Sutanati and Govindpore (the germ-soil of modern Calcutta) was obtained from the Moghul Emperor at Delhi largely through the good offices of Khoja Sarhaud; how Petrus Arathoon secretly, and at personal peril, furnished the Pulta refugees from the wrath of Siraj-ud-doulah, with boat-loads of provisions, and how Aga Manual Satoor befriended Holwell and his fellow captives in the time of their imprisonment at Murshidabad Yet these are historical facts.—

Yours, etc.,

HERBERT A. STARK.

Ramna, Dacca, June 1.

During the years 1925 to 1930 a local branch of the Armenian General Benevolent Union with its Headquarters in New York was formed in Calcutta, and I



His Excellency the Governor of Bihar & Orissa and Mrs. Whitty with party at Mr. Arathoon's Factory at Jhalda, 1934.

found Mr. Arathoon as one of the earliest members of this charitable body.

The years of trade depression appear not to have left any impression on the Shellac trade, or perhaps the effects of the depression have been forgotten with the lapse of time, so I could not record much about the period 1928 to 1934. But, it would appear that with the founding of the Indian Lac Cess Committee and the establishment of the Indian Lac Research Institute, grater interest was taken in the factories producing shellac.

It was, therefore, a red-letter day for the factory at Jhalda when early in November 1934, His Excellency, the Governor of Bihar and Orissa and Mrs. Whitty accompained by their staff and several well known gentlemen visited Mr. Arathoon's factory, at Jhalda

After a complete tour of the premises, where every operation was followed with keen interest, a group photograph was taken in front of the house. In the photograph appear Their Excellencies, Mr. & Mrs. Arathoon, their two daughters, Mr. H. C. Arakiel the Manager of the factory, Mrs. Arakiel and other visitors.

Mr. Arathoon must have been a proud man on this day to welcome Their Excellencies to his factory, which he had founded with so much toil and labour, with so much care and attention, and in such humble beginnings.

CHAPTER VIII

AN AMERICAN'S VIEW

About this time, (15th November, 1932, to be exact), certain American gentlemen also visited Jhalda and one of them has left a written record of his impressions. Coming as this does from a total outsider's pen it is interesting to learn what opinions others had of Jhalda. Therefore, I consider it would not be out of place to reproduce it here, as it also concerns our pioneer, Mr A M Arathoon

November 15th, 1932
Jhalda

This is the centre of the lac producing area in all India. The population is 6,000. It is located 238 miles northwest of Calcutta, and the nearest rail junction is Muri. This station is eight miles from Jhalda. You arrange to travel from Muri to Jhalda by motor, otherwise the entrance to Jhalda by train is much more difficult, since it has only one single line railroad running a connection to the town.

Scenery —The view is really something to mention. The country is thoroughly green , animal life is at its very best, and the surrounding hills and vales remind one of the Japanese prints of heaven The hills rise abruptly



Some of "The People"
Mr Arathoon with lac Collectors, Jhalda.

and seem one solid sheet of slate rock. The side is smooth, and at the very summit, perhaps, you will see a large green bay tree spreading its shade over the top as though nature means to show how beneficial she can be. Ox drawn carts give a picturesque touch to the surroundings, especially so when entire families travel together in the small ox cart as they do in this country. The roads are plain mud, but they are well graded by hand labour and a car can travel at the rate of 40 miles per hour without danger. Water is plentiful, and wells are deep. Looking into any well you may see dozens of frogs frollicking about. The natives draw this water and drink it. The colour of water is soapy and evidently the taste is none too good.

The People.—Are as different from the Bengalis of Calcutta, as Main Street is different from New York. Simple, aboriginal folk, healthy and happy. The average wage for an expert mechanic is thirteen annas, or twentyfour cents. Minor mechanics get six annas, or ten cents, per day. These figures are a fact, having been ascertained from actual records. The food of the people is uniform and consists of a bowl of rice, a small bowl of greens and 'pan' leaf smeared with lime. The cost of forty pounds of rice is twentysix cents, sufficient to last a family of five for one week. For clothes they wear two flimsy sheets, which sheets are kept far more clean than Calcutta streets They wear no shoes and no head covering. The women are very ornamental, the jewellery for the most part consisting of nickel,

brass or gold circles attached to any part of the body, but more particularly to the feet. The men are puny and a five foot man is about the average for size. The women have splendid upright carriages and when young are exceptionally beautiful They carry themselves with a pride most pleasant to behold. The children go about naked and are with the parents wherever their place of employment might be. They use no implements in carrying the food to their mouths. They simply squat and lift the rice in handfuls to their mouth.

Their houses are built of plain mud, covered with bamboo sticks for roof On the roof more mud is poured, and this makes the house rainproof and cool The house consists for the most part of one room and the family squat about a dim light in the centre of the room They neither eat meat nor drink rum, and if proper sanitary precautions were taken they would live a long time However, due to insanitary surroundings, a person at the age of 50 is almost unknown. They die young, without much regret and the funeral expense is the cost of one match, since they burn their dead and empty the ashes into the stream.

Some years ago, when wages were twice as high as they are now, the people took to a more luxurious mode of life, which was very bad for them, since they took to drink. The recent slump has sobered them for the most part, and they are an orderly, and a gentle people

History of the Settlement.—Some 30 years age, a young and energetic Armenian boy named Arathoon, with a Shellac business, determined to erect a Shellac factory in the producing area of India. It was at that time a novel idea. The factory was erected and, as it employed many people, it was natural that the town grew. Subsequently other people, mostly Armenians, came to Jhalda and also opened factories for the manufacture of Shellac. Now the town boasts of quite a few such factories and the population has, of course, grown to meet the demand of these factories. The Armenian colony is a most pleasant one. The people are young, happy and quite contented in one anothers company. They have erected a community centre and tennis court. There are no churches in the town and so it follows that there are no jails

Greens, Shrubs Fruits.—Bananas in abundance but not as smooth as the American product. Apples, green and rather poor quality. Tangerines which they call oranges, of good quality. Cocoanuts which they use only for the milk content, plums, on which tree the lac bug thrives, and guava and Mango. The latter fruit is not now in season, although everyone admits that it is simply divine. The guava is pear shaped and is a combination of banana, apple and pear for taste. Shade and all other trees are in abundance. Shrubs are scarce, since it is so easy to develop trees of all kind.

Animal Life.—From the bug which is the smallest,

since 100,000 can crowd into an inch of space, to the elephant, which is the largest, the country is full of beasts and snakes of all kinds. On the country roads, the eyes of the jackals flash a light not dissimilar to the headlight of a motorcycle. I have seen the sight twice on an eight mile trip, so the wild animals evidently roam at night. They do not disturb any one that does not disturb then, being content to feed upon one another. The native fear not the lion, the tiger, the jackal, or the snakes.

Implements.—For defence they carry simple head axes of the time of William the Conqueror. For other purposes, their tools are distinctly primitive, no improvement being noted of the implements used in the prebiblical period.

Their manners—To the white man is extraordinary. They will not sit if you stand, and they will salaam from the ground upwards. They evidently regard the white man as a sort of superior being. In all games of sports in which the white indulge, the Indians act as slaves, running after the balls and acting as burden bearers generally.

Shellac.—Its growth The lac bug is a small redflea, not bad to look at. It is propogated by tying a loaded branch to a plum or any other fruit bearing tree, plum preferably. This is all the cultivation that has to be done. Thereafter, the bugs will spread over all the branches.



Host Trees for lac

Lac taken off from trees in the middle of the photograph

That will be their home and they will never leave it. They begin to feed on the tender bark and after a while the juice oozing through their bodies, covers both themselves and their eggs. The young lac escape, but the eggs encrustate and four times a year the natives clip the branches The result is not different from a pruning of any tree. New leaves bud and new branches soon grow and the crop commences another cycle. There is a never ending production and if the demand ever doubled or trebled it would be quite simple to multiply the output. No labour is required and the bugs simply tend to themselves. As to the size of the trees, they are large or small according to age, but a tree twenty feet around and one hundred feet high would not be unusual

The farmer clips the branches and places them in burlap bags, he then loads the bags on his oxen and drives slowly to the Shellac factories. There he unshackles his oxen and makes himself at home. He cooks his rice and has a good time for a while gossiping with his friends. Then he will proceed to bargain for the sale of his sticklac. It may only be thirty cents worth but he will bargain over it all the day and finally toward the close of the day he will reach an agreement, accept his money, yoke up his oxen and wend his way homeward again, his belly full of rice and his pocket full of questionable money.

The manager of Arathoon's plant is H. C. Arakiel,

and he lives on the premises, in a beautiful house reminiscent of our own colonial period. The house is well furnished and well built, containing among other things Mr. Arathoon's weakness, china crazy floors. The entrance to the house faces the buying platform of the factory The factory itself is contained in two compounds. The first, quadrangular in shape holds the buying plant, the office, the crushing plant and the washing plant. There is a second story used for storage and seasoning of finished goods.

The other compound, also quadrangular, holds the melting, the blending, the winnowing and the drying departments. The entire outfit in America, would be worth perhaps a million dollars Here the value remains undetermined. The structures are completely fireproof, and the brick and tile are handmade products of Jhalda. There is electricity, and motive power supplied by factory motors.

Process of Manufacture.—There are twelve processes through which the sticklac must go, as follows :—

(1) Crush the Sticklac
(2) Pass it through sieve to get rid of sticks.
(3) Wash in cold water to get rid of dye.
(4) Dry.
(5) Hand Winnowing to get rid of foreign matter.
(6) Mix with arsenic, 4 ounces to each maund.
(7) Pour into sausage tubes made of cloth.
(8) Revolve before charcoal oven

(9) Press melted produce into sheets.
(10) Examine for rough spots and discoloration.
(11) Season and dry.
(12) Ship.

Better quality Shellac are made as follows :—

A. From the finer portions of the seedlac.
B. Blending.
C. From the age of the sticklac.

Crushing.—This is a machine process and consists of simple corn crushers. Hand labour is preferable, and hand benches are available, but the process is tedious and slow.

Sieve.—A mechanical contraption that discards large pieces from a shaking screen

Waterwashing —This is done in cylinderical revolving tanks by the simple process of running fresh water through the lac for about three hours When the water runs clear the dye is removed However, this is not done in the case of buttonlac, since the hand process definitely removes the dye, while the machine process does not do the job as well. The hand process is simply terrible to behold. Five pounds of seedlac are placed in an earthenware bowl built into the ground Four men begin to wash the lac and they rub as hard as possible for at least ten minutes, moistening with water. Then they add more water and rub again. Then again and again,

renewing the water each time. Finally a waste matter is removed, black and sandy. This waste goes to Germany and it must be the stuff they bleach and ship to America for first class goods. Finally, the finished product is bared and it is pretty to behold. It sparkles like so many rubies The laundry has done a good job. The dye is wasted. It is ruby red in colour and at one time this dye was worth more than the lac. With synthetic dyes, this branch has fallen upon evil days, and the dye is run out into the creek. I cannot but believe that this dye has some commercial value However, if it had, the Germans would have been here long ago.

Drying.—The process is simple. They lay the wet lac in the sun spread out on a sunheated pavement.

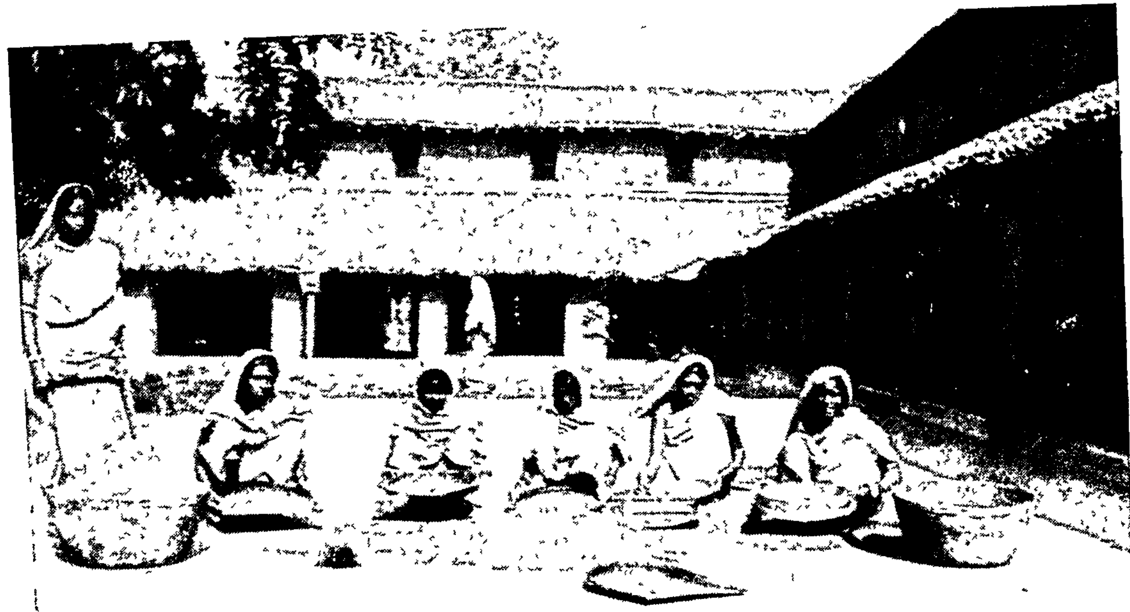
Winnowing.—Dozens of women, squatting with willow-ware trays, removing the 'chaff from the wheat.' Interesting to see this equipment that has not changed in five thousand shellac years

Arsenic.—Is quite expensive, but they mix a quantity with the lac and it aids the colour.

Sausage Tubes.—The tubes are the exact size of a good sized bologna. They are some twenty feet long. One man stands at one and revolving the tube and the other stands at the other end. The tubes turns before a charcoal fire and finally the contents turn fluid and ooze



Lac Brought to the Factory



Women Winnowing Crushed Stick Lac



Men Washing Seed lac Manually



Spreading washed Seed lac to dry



Carrying Seed Lac to Store





Processing Shellac in Cloth Tube before a fire



Sorting Processed Shellac

through the cloth. It is then dabbed on a hot cylinder where a man presses it down with a palm leaf. The result is a sheet of shellac about the size of a leather skin. These are placed one atop the other and are sent to the examining room. There the rough spots are picked out and the stuff is ready for seasoning and shipping

The sticks left from the sticklac are used for fuel Women labourers, beautiful in appearance, slowly remove the debris to the various work centres. It is not unusual for a woman to carry a load on her head, with her pappoose clinging to her side, strapped.

Germany.—Uses all the lower grade lac as well as all of the bye-products, such as Shellac dust. Ornaments for local use are made from this dust.

Button Lac —Mr. Arathoon is properly proud of his button It is a hand product throughout and is made exactly like the other Shellac except that the hot lac is dropped onto tins, like so many cakes, instead of being poured on the hot cylinders. A man stands there and stamps each button Mr. Arathoon produces even a better button, but this does not go to America It is high priced and is used locally for home uses. However, it can be had if any one wants something really special It looks the same as the regular grade except that it is lighter in colour and is as free from impurities as Shellac can be. Buttonlac is made from a mixture of Kusmi and Bysacki.

The plant is large, airy, pleasant and modern. It is equipped for a large business, The present Manager has been in charge for thirty years and anyone buying an Arathoon product is assured of reliability and uniformity.

Respectfully submitted,
F. Beryl Lush
Philadelphia, U. S. A.

Work in Jhalda and Murhu factories appear to have gone on as usual from 1934 to the beginning of World War II.

During the war, naturally, there was greater activity in Shellac production required for all purposes, beginning from insulation for motors to varnishing the inside of High Explosive Shells.

Many people made much money, others lost fortunes, but the trade went on in spite of Japanese bombing of Calcutta.

The next important event besides the marriage of Mr. Arathoon's two daughters, already mentioned, is that during 1948 Messrs. A. M. Arathoon Ld, celebrated the Golden Jubilee of the founding of the firm and an extract from the "Statesman", a well-known Calcutta Daily, printed in English, gave an account of the gathering thus :—

"Members of the Shellac Firms in Calcutta



The Morning Papers

gathered at 3, Rawdon Street on Saturday to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Mr A. M. Arathoon's connection with the trade. In thanking the gathering Mr. Arathoon described the early days of the industry and the opening of a factory at Ranchi District (Jhalda) to process the raw material, a development which led to Calcutta replacing Mirzapur as the main centre of the trade."

In order to tie up the following account of Mr A. M. Arathoon's tour of Europe and America during 1951-52, I must go back to the year 1948 when Mr. G N. Aratoon, the husband of Edith, the elder daughter of Mr. & Mrs Arathoon was taken into Mr. Arathoon's business. Mr. G N. Aratoon was previously with the firm of G. A. Arratoon & Co., also of Stephen House, Calcutta. Mr Arathoon (senior) was by now 63 years of age and the idea of his son-in-law coming into his business was quite welcome, in as much as the running of the business could be partially conducted by the son-in-law. Sometime before this Mr. Arathoon's business had been converted into a privately owned limited liability company under the title of A M. Arathoon & Co. Ltd , having their Registered Office at 11, Stephen House, Dalhousie Square, with Factories at Jhalda and Murhu.

Mr. Aratoon (Jr.) took up his work with enthusiasm and helped in extending and reconditioning the factory at Murhu under the able guidance of Mr. Arathoon Senior.

Mr. A. M Arathoon contemplated a tour of Europe and America with a view to coming into direct contact with his agents and customers and getting an intimate insight into conditions prevailing in foreign markets

So it was arranged that Mr. Arathoon with Mrs Arathoon should start from Calcutta and accompanied by their two daughters who were in England should visit the United States and Canada.

CHAPTER IX

MR ARATHOON'S TOUR

IN EUROPE and AMERICA 1951-1952

Mr. & Mrs. Arathoon left Calcutta by B.O.A.C. plane on 23rd April 1951 and after an uneventful flight reached London on the 24th. At the Air Port they were met by their daughter Vera, her husband, and Miss. Marjorie Bond. They then proceeded to Mayfair Hotel where more friends and visitors called on them. Soon they settled down to living in London for some time.

A Humber Snipe car was purchased at a cost of £960-13-0 and Mr. Arathoon was enrolled as a Member of the Automobile Association. Much of the driving was done by Eddie before a driver was engaged.

Mrs. Arathoon, Vera and Eddie were busy with the usual shopping excursions while Mr. Arathoon visited business friends.

It was during this year that the famous "Festival of Britain" was held and Mr. & Mrs. Arathoon, with daughters and friends, like many millions of visitors to London, went to the exhibition grounds.

Meantime arrangements were being made for a visit to the United States and Canada.

The arrangements being completed, Mr & Mrs. Arathoon accompanied by Eddie and Vera sailed on S. S. "Queen Elizabeth" on the morning of the 17th May 1951 from Southhampton

Mr Arathoon described the usual round of activities on board the ship, mentioning horse racing and pictures after dinner.

For a day or two the ship was "shaky due to rough seas" as Mr. Arathoon had it in his diary, but the ship entered calm waters shortly thereafter.

On Sunday the 20th May a church service was held on board and Mr Arathoon attended Heavy fog close to the American Continent held up the ship for several hours on the 22nd, on the evening of which day the ship anchored in New York Harbour

At the pier the visitors were met by Mr. Suhr who took care of everything till they reached their hotel— Hotel Victoria, on the 7th Avenue 21st Street. Mrs Suhr took Vera and Eddie to see New Yorks sights, but Mrs Arathoon could not accompany them.

On the 29th May Mr. Arathoon attended a Lunch party, organised by the United States Shellac Importers Association, in honour of his visit.

During the Lunch toasts were raised to the visitor



United States Shellac Importers
Honour Mr Arathoon

by Mr. Louis Gilespie the President of the Association who during his speech welcomed Mr. Arathoon, and recalled long years of association with the shipper from India. Mr. Arathoon in reply thanked the Association for the hearty welcome and the gathering of the members in his honour at the lunch party A photograph was also taken which appears on the opposite page.

After lunch informal talk continued for some time relative to problems connected with import of shellac, method of assessing values etc. The party broke up after many a handshake and good-wishes.

After some more sightseeing, berths were booked for visiting Canada and the party—Mr. & Mrs. Arathoon and daughters left from La Gardia Aerodrome on the 5th June 1952 for Montreal.

The tour of Montreal and outskirts appear to have impressed Mr Arathoon who recorded in his diary that "this was the most beautiful place we have ever seen". From Montreal the visitors went to Toronto and after a stay of a couple days during which time Niagara falls were visited they returned to U S.A. and touched down at Chicago, from where they flew to San Francisco.

At San Francisco more business friends called on Mr. Arathoon and family, and one Mr. Frank Vandyke who had married Gal Gregory's daughter took them out for a long drive, over the "longest bridge of the world," that

is the Golden Gate Bridge "to a nice little house where they met Mrs. Vandyke's and two sweet little girls".

From San Francisco the party went to Los Angeles. During their stay in Los Angeles the party visited the Grand Canyon passing through the National Park On their return they saw an Indian dance specially arranged for the benefit of the visitors

From Los Angeles the party returned to Chicago and thence flew to Washington D C While in Washington the party visited the mint where they saw the printing of American doller notes the output per day being 70 to 80 millions. They visited the National Art Galleries and saw the Gulbenkian Art Collections, housed in a "Magnificient Building" as Mr. Arathoon put it in his diary On the 27th June a very heavy downpour occured in Washington and Mr Arathoon described this in the following words "One would think we were in Bengal". Mr. Arathoon also met Mr. Hasan Isphahani, the Pakistani Ambassador, who was an old acquaintance of Mr. Arathoon before the partition of India, Mr Hasan Isphahani too being in the shellac business in Calcutta.

From Washington the party went to Philadelphia and Mr. Arathoon and Eddie visited the Roman Chtholic Church there They next returned to New York where Mr Suhr met them and took them to his home in Long Island, 30 miles away

The day after their visit to long Island Mr Arathoon visited the office of the United States Shellac Importers Association and watched the examination of parcels of shellac samples being examined. In this connection his remarks in his diary records—"I found the examiner tested very fairly: if every time the examination is carried out in the same way, shippers have no cause to complain"

While in New York Mr Arathoon transacted some business, because it is recorded that he sold to Dings & Shuster 200 bags of Bysaki at 35 cents, shipment July, and a further 200 & 400 bags of Bysaki at 35 & 39 cents, respectively.

Their stay in U S A and Canada had lasted nearly 8 weeks and now Mr. Arathoon and family prepared to return to London Necessary permits having been obtained, berths were booked on the "Queen Mary' which sailed for London on the 14th July

Shortly after their arrival in London on the 20th July they visited Christopher's School (Eddie's son) where a boxing match was in progress, and took Christopher home for the week end Back in London Mr. and Mrs. Arathoon must needs attened the Armenian Church, and after the day was over they dropped Christopher back at his school. A great attachment between grand-parents and grandson is noticeable because through-out their stay in London, many times reference is

made to Christopher coming home and returning to school.

Not satisfied with having seen the U.S.A. and parts of Canada, Mr. and Mrs. Arathoon proposed to visit Continental Europe. So a round trip commencing from London to Norway, Sweeden, Germany, Italy, France and back to England was arranged. For the two in the party, all tickets by air, hotel bookings tours etc. came to a sum of £303-5-0. They started their journey by flying to Oslo on the 13th August, arriving at the place the same day at 9-30 P M after a flight of 5 hours.

Here more business friends were met, among whom are mentioned Mr. Peter Horw Sight seeing excursions, visits to farms and Viking ships etc. completed the party's visit to Oslo.

Next place visited was Gothenburg where they arrived at 9-15 P.M. after a flight of 2 hours. Here more business friends were met and places of interest visited including a visit to a ship-building yard Mr. Arathoon's comment after meeting Mr. Erikson was "they seem nice people, we can easily ship goods on their account and draw payment against documents or even arrival of steamer."

From Gothenburg, the Arathoons flew to Hamberg via Copenhagen in about 4 hours.

A business friend by name of Mr. Sietz called on Mr. and Mrs. Arathoon and showed them round the town. One Mr. Earhardt took Mr. Arathoon to his home and introduced him to Mrs. Earhardt. Mr. Arathoon's remark in his diary records "a most charming lady" Other friends were also at the dinner party viz. Mr. Hanns I. Rankew and two other ladies. They had "very good dinner with Champaigne going". Meantime Mrs. Arathoon had been taken care of by Mrs. Sietz.

Next day Mr. Sietz met the party to say good-bye as the latter were leaving for Geneva.

Two days in Geneva, buying watches, nylons and chocolates, walking around the lake and preparing to go to Milan completed the visit to Geneva

Arrival at Milan is recorded as at 5 55 P M on August the 25th. Exchange of Swiss Francs for Italian Liras are shown at 100 Swiss Francs to 14000 Liras But a taxi ride of a short distance is shown at 300 Liras. Sight seeing combined with business calls occupied the time at Milan, but Mrs. Arathoon was beginning to feel the strain of the journey.

From Milan to Paris by air took only 2 hours.

In Paris Mr. Arathoon was taken to the Bourse by business friends, while Mrs. Arathoon went shopping Leaving Paris by air for London, they arrived in an

hour and three quarters time, having enjoyed a very good lunch and Champaigne on board the plane.

Their Continental tour had taken them only 17 days and they were back in London on the 1st of September.

A couple days after their return the party left for Edinburgh. First Eddie and Christopher went by car then Mr. and Mrs Arathoon went by train and were met at the station by Mr. Corstorphine, Vera's husband. They stayed at Roxbourgh Hotel for about 20 days and visited Loch Lomond, Balmoral Castle and the countryside.

After a stay of another four days Mr. and Mis Arathoon returned to London this time to stay there for a long time.

On November 21, Mr. and Mrs. Arathoon celebrated their wedding anniversary, among a gathering of many friends.

On the 26th November Mr. Arathoon had the misfortune to learn that there had been a fire at their office in Calcutta, on the 20th November Mr Arathoon recorded in his diary that he was shocked and much worried

As Christopher's Christmas holidays were close at hand it was arranged to take him to India to see his father, so Eddie and Christopher left for Calcutta on the 12th December and the son-in-law Mr. G. N. Aratoon was informed of their departure by cable.

After Eddie's and Christopher's departure Mr. Arathoon was off his food, as he stated in his diary—"may be due to lonliness."

Vera, Sandy—her son and Ellice her husband soon arrived from Edinburgh to spend X'mas with the old couple. X'mas was spent in a good style with plenty of everything nice. Vera and party stayed in London and brought in the New Year with Mr. and Mrs. Arathoon.

As the Armenian Christmas falls on the 6th of January, Vera remained in London to go to the Armenian Church on that day with her father and mother.

Sandy and Mr Arathoon were good friends and they often went shopping together each carrying a basket proportionate to his age.

But Sandy and Vera had to return and grandpa had to say good bye. Mr. Arathoon described the departure of Vera and Sandy in these terms.—I went to see them off but I could not bear to see Sandy's eyes full of tears, I left ten minutes before the train's departure "

Left by themselves the old couple carried on doing a bit of the house work while the house keeper Mrs. Glyde did the cooking.

Meanwhile Christopher's holidays in India were nearly

ended and he returned to England for going to school on the 17th January. Before his arrival grandpa had booked 3 seats at Olympia "this was booked specially for Christopher's benefit", and Christopher enjoyed the show immensely

Mr. Arathoon had always been in the habit of going for a walk every morning while in Calcutta. The usual morning walks now became a feature of Mr. Arathoon's daily outings in London too.

King George the Vth's death is mentioned by Mr. Arathoon in his diary and they, like all loyal subjects of His Majesty, went to see the King lying in State at Westminster Hall, on the 14th February 1952.

The queue Mr. and Mrs. Arathoon joined was six-a-breast. The time taken to enter and leave the Hall was 90 minutes. "It was a great sight to see the guards and officers guarding the King's coffin, standing with reversed swords and spears like bronze statues". Further on describing the people going to pay homage to their late King Mr. Arathoon had the following to say in his diary —"English people are to be admired for the devotion and loyalty to the Crown, most orderly and disciplined people in the world, in my opinion".

Bridge parties and entertaining visiting friends occupied their time, but they did not forget their friends and servants in India. During one shopping excursion Mrs. Arathoon purchased a tailor's scissors for her tailor in

Calcutta and some handkerchiefs as presents for the inmates of the S. P. G Mission

About the begining of March Mr. Arathoon received a very depressing letter about business in Calcutta, but Mr. Arathoon had always had a brave heart, he consoled himself thus in his diary .—"I have seen great ups and downs in my business career since April 1898, from here I cannot do anything until I return to India, and that cannot be done before middle of May next".

After April 1952 Mr. and Mrs. Arathoon moved to Edinburgh to live with their daughter Vera, and remained there till the end of July.

During this period both Mr. and Mrs. Arathoon had the misfortune to fall sick Mr Arathoon was attacked by jaundice and Mrs. Arathoon with pneumonia Mr. Arathoon was taken to a Nursing Home where, at one time owing to some complications an operation was considered necessary. Eddie on hearing of this flew from Calcutta to Scotland arriving there on the 26th June. Mr. Arathoon recorded in his diary that "to my delight I saw Eddie".

Fortunately the operation became unnecessary and after remaining in the Nursing Home for 22 days Mr. Arathoon returned home quite well. Mrs. Arathoon was attended to at home by doctors and with the loving care of Vera the pneumonia was cured in due course.

Their stay in Edinburgh, apart from the above sickness was otherwise very happy and they left Edinburgh on the 31st July to live in London again.

Eddie had in the meantime moved from London to Selsey, where Mr. and Mrs. Arathoon visited her and Christopher for a day, and spent an enjoyable time at the sea side

Life in London continued as usual, visits to business friends' offices for Mr Arathoon, shopping for Mrs. Arathoon , friends and relatives calling on the old couple filled the time till the day when they began preparations to return to Calcutta.

They left the London Airport, amidst the good wishes of many friends , Vera their daughter being among them They arrived in Calcutta on the 16th September and were welcomed back by their son-in-law Mr. G. N. Aratoon and many friends at the Airport at Dum Dum.

On reaching their home, at 3 Rawdon Street, all the servants gave them a rousing welcome. At office the same day Mr. Arathoon was garlanded and welcomed back again

At a party held on the 19th many business friends and acquiantances who had not yet seen Mr. and Mrs. Arathoon welcomed them back.

Mr. and Mrs. Arathoon of course next visited Jhalda and Murhu, the two factories, where further welcomes awaited both of them. Mr. Arathoon soon got into his old stride again. There was activity in buying stick lac, crushing, washing, making button lac and seed lac, seeing to imports and despatches. Very often Mr. Arathoon supervised the job personally.

A small extension to one building in Murhu factory was also taken in hand during this time with son-in-law helping in the work.

During Mr. Arathoon's stay in Jhalda and Murhu, the office work was carried on by the son-in-law who went up to Jhalda and Murhu during the week ends.

Apart from his interest in his factories Mr. Arathoon is also a keen amature farmer. He had sent out a tractor from England for ploughing his paddy fields in Jhalda and Murhu and he had recorded that he sowed wheat and paddy with good results.

During their stay in Murhu the teachers of the S. P G. Mission were entertained to tea and doubtless received the presents Mrs. Arathoon had so thoughtfully bought for them in London.

It was towards the end of November when Mr. Arathoon returned to Calcutta preparatory to their son-in-law's departure for London to join his family

after a well earned holiday. Mr G. N. Aratoon left Calcutta on the 14th December 1952 and soon spent a very enjoyable Christmas with his family and Vera, her husband and son, in Edinburgh.

Visitors from London had meantime come to Calcutta and on their return were loaded with presents for friends in London. Thus ended the year 1952, a very memorable year for Mr. Arathoon and his family.

CHAPTER X

CALCUTTA SHELLAC TRADE ASSOCIATION

Between 1953 and 1955, there are several important items worth recording.

During the year 1951 an Association had been formed in Calcutta by those in the Shellac trade called the Calcutta Shellac Trade Association. Mr. Arathoon was President of this body for several years. I came across his Presidential address at the 3rd Annual General meeting of the Association held on Monday the 15th March 1954

After welcoming those present Mr. Arathoon spoke as follows :—

"In reviewing the activities of the Association and the state of the shellac trade during 1953, I cannot do better than refer to the wise and farsighted survey of the trade made by my predecessor, Mr. J P. Young at the annual general meeting last year. You will remember that he analysed the position in three aspects.

Fistly, the difficulties of the Indian Shellac trade which, he said, were due mainly to the fluctuations

of the International lac market and to the competition of substitutes .

Secondly, the need to maintain a stable price for shellac free from sudden speculative changes in order to avert any possible Government control of prices.

Thirdly, the important part which this Association could and must play in improving the position of the trade.

These statements remain as true today as they were one year ago I do not intend to do more in this review than to point out briefly the developments during 1953

Taking first the difficulties of the trade, it must be said that the prosphesies of Mr. Young were fully borne out in the market position during 1953 Since the boom three years ago trading conditions have been unfavourable partly because in the slump conditions in foreign market prices for the Indian product were comparatively low, while the Indian raw material was dear on account of short crops Competition was severe among shippers and demand was limited. This had repercussions on the trade in India where there was a measure of unemployment in upcountry areas and factories had to close down But each rung of the trade in Calcutta also has felt the strain. One of the features of the year has been the Shellac Enquiry Commission

set up by the Government of Bihar. I am glad to say that the members of the trade here co-operated fully with the Commission in its deliberations, thus showing that the trade in Calcutta is much concerned with the general position and is anxious to remedy it The Association's representatives in giving evidence were bound to say, however, that the remedy lay not in Government control or with the overseas buyer but rather in the possibility of expanding the Indian market. The Enquiry Commission has not issued any public report containing its findings but it is certain that the Commission was forced back upon the only long-term solution which the trade could suggest

There is no room for complacency or fatalism in the shellac trade. Prompted by the Shellac Enquiry Commission and also the Lac Cess Committee, the Association has been investigating means of improving the weaknesses of the Calcutta market, of which we are all aware. The Association first recommended in October that the lac trade should come within the orbit of the Forward Market Commission so that the futures market in lac should be stabilised under the Act. To that end, representatives of this Association discussed the matter with the Chairman of the Forward Market Commission, Dr Naidu, in Bombay recently. The advice of Dr. Naidu was in short that the trade itself should try to put its affairs in order before Government was forced to step in. Since that time a Sub-Committee under the Chairmanship of our Vice-President, Mr. Smith, has been investi-

gating the matter in conjunction with the representatives of the Calcutta Shellac Exchange The recommendations of this Sub-Committee are of the greatest importance to our trade and industry and are awaited with interest.

For the future we hope by restricting the speculative elements in our trade, by improving trade practice and by ensuring standard qualities, to be able to set the trade in order without Government assistance. Manufacturers must realise that Shellac is giving way to synthetics Most of the gramophone manufacturers are not using shellac since, because of wild speculation, they cannot reliably calculate their prices nor depend on the quality. It is therefore absolutely necessary to improve the quality of shellac.

In conclusion I would like to express to you the honour that I have felt and the pleasure I have had in acting as President of this Association during the third year of its existence It is my pleasant duty to thank our Vice-President, Mr. Smith, for his valuable assistance during my year of office and to the Working Committee and to all members for their co-operation. Also may I thank those who have helped the Association by preparing market reports, by assisting as arbitrators and by sitting on the various Sub-Committees which have been set up from time to time ? I would also like to express my appreciation of the valuable services of our Secretary, Mr. Long (who proceeded on leave in January) and of our present Secretary, who have both done good

work for the Association in dealing with the complications of our shellac trade. I think we are all agreed that much is to be gained by unity in our trade and I hope that members will continue to give the same support and co-operation to the Association in the future".

CHAPTER XI

MR. AND MRS. ARATHOON'S GOLDEN WEDDING

1955 was another year of joy for the Arathoons who on November 21st celebrated their Golden Wedding.

Vera had flown out from Scotland for the occasion and as Mrs Arathoon had not been keeping good health. Vera arranged everything for the reception of guests who had been invited to the Golden Wedding.

Elegently decorated tables were well laid out and drinks of every kind were at hand. The party began with many rounds of drinks and Mr. and Mrs. Arathoon were given a very rousing cheer for the 50th anniversary of their Wedding. The gathering was large and very representative, both Mr and Mrs Arathoon being in the best of spirits in spite of the recent illness of Mrs Arathoon

Many good wishes were expressed, group photographs were taken and everyone was well entertained.

The party, which must have exceeded 150 in number, slowly broke up with further expressions of good wishes and hopes of being present at the diamond aniversary.



Mr. and Mrs. Arathoon at their Golden Wedding
21st November 1955

There was only one sad note, which I think was not noticed by many except those very close to them, and that was the absence of Eddie and her husband. Otherwise the party was gay and everyone happy, thanks to the arrangements made by Vera who worked indefatigably during the whole time, having a good word and a pleasant smile for every one present.

One could have noticed tears of joy in the eyes of the old couple as the guests, one by one, wished them good-bye.

CHAPTER XII

INDIAN LAC CESS COMMITTEE

A very brief statement by the Secretary of the Committee Mr Pritam Singh on the activities of the Indian Lac Cess Committee is given in the Souvenir published by the Cess Committee in celebration of its Silver Jubilee in 1956 This I find very informative. Mr. Pritam Singh does not however go as far back as 1917 when the Lindsay-Harlow Commission was first examining witnesses from the Industry. The information given on page 43 of this book therefore is an earlier record

The Cess Committee was a healthy child from birth and it endured the vicissitudes of World War II In fact it appears to have thrived on the struggle and had attained full stature soon after the conclusion of hostilities. Its activities seem to have gone on without interruption but unobserved until the celebration in 1956 of the Silver Jubilee of its foundation

The publication of the Souvenir, a very beautiful and massive brochure, contained messages of encouragement and good wishes from thePresident of the Indian Union, the Minister of Food and Agriculture, Minister of Commerce and Industry, the Chief Ministers of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh,



Silver Jubilee, Indian Lac Cess Committee, 1956
His Excellency, The Governor of Bihar (In the Middle)
with Members of Indian Lac Cess Committee & Mr Arathoon, (Second from right).

West Bengal and Assam, together with a large number of articles on the various aspects of the Shellac Industry. Among these articles the first one is "Reminiscences of the Lac Industry" by our Mr. A. M. Arathoon, and is worth reproduction.

REMINISCENCES OF THE LAC INDUSTRY

A. M. ARATHOON

MEMBER, INDIAN LAC CESS COMMITTEE.

"The story of the development of lac industry in India, dating back thousands of years, is one of fortitude and gradual progress in a sphere in which India, till late, held a monopoly Except those closely connected with the trade, few perhaps must have realised that lac has been peculiar to India as long perhaps as one would care to remember

It is not easy to recall to mind the different phases of the development of this industry, yet it is certain that every business executive, factory worker and the humble agriculturist engaged in the trade has contributed in equal measure to the prosperity of the industry which has seeped into almost every household in the world in the form of furniture and floor polishes, gramophone records, electrical goods, hats, etc

At one time lac itself was of little value, its only utility being the dye which was extracted by boiling it, to colour silk and other cloth. The residue was thrown

away as worthless but the dye was important in as much as it earned for India lakhs of rupees in years gone by.

The ingenuity of man, however, brought to an end the Indian lac dye industry. Experimenting assidously for years, scientists discoved aniline dyes and thus the death-knell of lac dye was tolled But on the hozizon was a bright spot and hope came anew to the lac industry. While on the aniline dyes scientists laboured, a dour Scotsman—Dr. Campbell—had been experimenting on lac and after much research presented Shellac to the world The commodity immediately took on a new commercial value.

The Pioneers at Mirzapur.

Dr Campbell did all his shellac experimenting and refining at Mirzapur which was in those days practically the only centre of lac trade. His proprietory mark, D C. Shellac, fetched the highest price Others engaged in the trade were two British firms, Messrs Jardine Skinner and Kilburn & Co., operating on a big scale in Mirzapur. Their shellac was of high quality and in great demand. A Mr. C. J. Sebold who did much for the lac industry, managed Kilburn & Co.'s factory for about 50 years before retiring in Allahabad.

Besides the two British firms there were a number of large factories at Mirzapur owned by Indians, all produc-

ing Superfine Shellac and all with their own proprietory marks. There was no such thing then as Lemon No. 1, Lemon No 2 and Standard 1 T N. Shellac was being manufactured from baisakhi and katki lac made in double cloth bags , single bag T. N. Shellac not being in demand in those days.

There was no machinery. Even for crushing lac age-old Indian methods were used. In the Mirzapur Shellac factory women crushed lac using big stone chakkis Three women were required to turn the huge top stone while two would sieve the crushed lac. The process was laborious, yet it worked well.

Wages were a mere pittance, the women receiving one and a half annas per head per day. The washermen (rangkarias) were paid two to two and a half annas a day, but in turn were compelled to wash a certain amount per day. For a staff of three (karigar, belwaiya, and pherwaiya), the melters, were paid seven annas a day, but were required to melt 40 seers of seedlac a day.

Move to Jhalda.

When I started my factory at Jhalda, I increased the melters' wages to nine annas. This increase of two annas enabled me to get men from Mirzapur.

For my factory, lac was available from Jhalda and from the adjacent Manbhum and Ranchi areas. The

Mirzapur factory owners also had their godowns at Jhalda, Bundu and Balrampur. They stored lac for two to three months, dried it and then despatched it by bullock-carts to Purulia from where it was sent by rail to Mirzapur

The people of Jhalda, Bundu and Balrampur did not know what shellac was, but they had seen buttonlac which was manufactured by a few Bengalis by mixing 25% rosin with the lac. After shellac was introduced in the districts, rosinous buttonlac ceased to be manufactured. Formerly, there was no demand from Mirzapur for Burma or Siam lac, the latter being purchased chiefly by Messrs. Angelo Bros. and one or two other manufacturers, for the manufacture of garnetlac.

Early Shipments of Shellac.

Shipment of shellac in those days did not exceeded 10,000 packages per month, but it gradually increased until in 1928, we shipped the following :

Orange Shellac	..	3,11,397	packages
Garnetlac	..	16,189	,,
Buttonlac	...	11,189	,,
TOTAL	...	3,38,775	,,

No seedlac was shipped and if there was any export of this comodity it was insignificant.

Buttonlac was manufactured from pure lac without any rosin. This time the plantain leaf method of making rosinous buttonlac had been discontinued and only pure buttonlac was in demand.

In the early days, for shipment purposes both Superfine and T. N. Shellac were packed in two-maund cases and covered with hessian cloth. Gunny bags were introduced by American buyers in World War I to save steamer freight

I remember the days when the London Syndicate began cornering shellac It was more than 20 years ago. Our shipment in one particular month then exceeded 75,000 packages Many of our shippers must remember fondly those "good old days".

Early Difficulties.

A difficulty which beset lac purchasers of those days was the cultivator s refusal to accept currency notes. Large quantities of silver coins had, therefore, to be taken from Calcutta to the districts Money-changers would make a discount of Rs. 2 - to Rs. 5/- on a hundred-rupee note, according to the demand at the time.

Another difficulty was transport. To go to Jhalda in the old days we had to follow a devious route. The then B. N Railway ran a service from Asansol to Nagpur. To go to Ranchi or Jhalda, one had to take

take a train from Howrah to Asansol and from there change for Purulia. At Purulia the traveller had to transfer to the 'push-push' which was carried by four or more person according to one's wish or pocket these 'services' changed four times in a distance of 28 miles.

Baisakhi Lac

Baisakhi lac was grown round Jhalda only on palas. It contained 5% sticks. Plum lac was grown in Manbazar and other places but not round Jhalda However, the cultivators gradually realised the value of plum lac and today it is plentiful all over and every year more trees are planted

There is one nefarious practice which requires stern governmental measures. During the baisakhi season lac comes for sale without sticks, but unscrupulous people mix sand. This is done by heating the sand and throwing it on to the lac It sinks in and cannot be detected by dealers at the time of purchase. The trick is only brought to light when the lac is crushed and washed. Sterner control, too, should be exercised over weighment.

Lac Research Institute

In 1916, there was a Commercial Commission under Sir Thomas Holland and I was asked to give evidence before the Commission with regard to the improvement

in the methods of cultivation and manufacture of lac. The Commission sat at Calcutta where it recorded my evidence.

The Lac Research Institute at Namkum was started in 1925 First of all there was a talk of having the Institute at Jubbulpore on account of the influence of shellac manufacturers in Mirzapur, but it was finally decided that Ranchi would be more suitable because of its climate and also the fact that 60 to 65 per cent of the lac was grown in Chota Nagpur and thus Namkum was chosen as an appropriate spot. The Institute from the beginning was being managed by the trade but it was later taken over by the Government and the trade had only representative members.

Prices.

The prices of shellac have always been subject to wide fluctuations, but the madir was reached with the collapse of the London Shellac Syndicate in 1934-35 when the price of shellac declined as low as to Rs. 11/- or so per maund. Curiously enough, large transactions took place at this extraordinary low price, till in August 1938 a meeting of the trade was called at Ranchi under the chairmanship of Dr. Sayed Mahmud, the then Minister for Education and Development, Bihar, with a view to raising the prices of shellac. Thereafter, price of shellac began to rise and it has since steadily been going up Today the price of shellac is about

Rs. 130/- and the price of kiri about Rs. 58/- per maund whereas formerly, the price of shellac was Rs. 30/- and price of kiri, Rs 1/8/- per. maund.

And so, in a nutshell, I have endeavoured to describe the different phases of the lac industry. This account may appear sketchy, but after all reminiscences are not history where details need be recorded."

In an Armenian weekly called "ASDARAR" published in Calcutta, in Vol. II No. 35 dated 11th April 1846 I came across the following interesting figures of export of Shellac mentioned along with various other commodities such as Sugar, Silk, Alum, Rice, Cotton and Opium —

"Shellac, that is the insect rosin, was sold Bhurbun quality Rs. 13/8/- ordinary Rs 10/8/-. Shellac exported to

Britain	640	Maunds
France	517	,,
America	251	,, "

Again in their No 52 of the same volume dated the 8th August 1846 it is stated .—

"Lac dye, or dye from lac : very little was sold, but Shellac is being sold at from Rs. 8/8/- to Rs. 8/12/-." Does this indicate that Shellac was being manufactured even as far back as in 1846, when the dye was still in demand ?



Mr. A. M. Arathoon at his desk
at the age of 83

Latterly Mr. Arathoon has not been so active in the Calcutta Shellac Trade Association, perhaps owing to his increasing years. He is now 83 years old, God Bless him ! But, wherever and whenever there is something afoot about Shellac Mr. Arathoon, as one of the oldest in the trade, either as manufacturer or as a shipper, is sure to be called upon for consulation or advice. So it is that in a new Association called the Indian Lac Export Association, Mr. Arathoon has again been called upon for his helpful advice, as usual.

CHAPTER XIII

DEATH OF MRS ARATHOON

The Golden Wedding was an opportunity for me to get very much more acquainted with Mr. and Mrs Arathoon and therefore I visited the couple fairly often thereafter

Mrs. Arathoon was not the same as she was before the celebration of their Golden Wedding, because she had not been keeping good health laterly. There was a note of frustration and sadness, difficult to explain and still more difficult to ask about. So in my own way I often quoted encouraging passages from the Scriptures, knowing that Mrs Arathoon was well versed in the Bible.

Vera had completed her work after the Golden Wedding was over and after a further stay of a couple of weeks she went back to Scotland to join her husband and son.

Time passed but Mrs. Arathoon did not very much improve, having to call in the family doctor oftener than before. Almost sixteen months had passed by unnoticed.

It was an early morning on the 5th of March 1957 when Vera, who had hurridly returned to Calcutta owing to her

mother's illness, called me up and gave me the sad news about her mother, I hastened to pay my last respects to a lady for whom I had great admiration. It was a sad scene, seeing the old man in a broken condition, weeping over her life's companion. His usual smile had vanished, he moved about slowly, he cared for nothing now, nothing since the best friend of his life was no more.

Vera was splendid, she was brave and did not flinch although it could be seen that she was equally grieved. But someone had to take care of things, attend to callers, accept their sympathetic expressions, and give necessary orders She managed all these under the burden of a great blow which had befallen the family, not very long after the Golden Wedding.

So the time came when Mrs. Arathoon had to be laid to her eternal rest. A sad company it was that followed behind the bier to the burial grounds, at Lower Circular Road cemetry in Calcutta The large number of floral tributes testified of the admiration and love that many had for the deceased and many were the sympathetic hand-shakes and sad kisses expressing condolence to Vera and the close relatives of the deceased. So ended the days of a lovely little girl, with blue eyes and pink cheeks seen by Mr Arathoon when he first set eyes upon her, many, many years before.

I see Mr. Arathoon often now, my feeling is that he is an extremely lonely man, and in order to forget

his loneliness he is now as active as he was perhaps 20 years ago. His mind is concentrated on his loved ones in England and Scotland and every mention of Vera and his other loved ones inspires him with a freshness which gives him additional zest to go on and on.

Mr. Arathoon very often leaves Calcutta for Jhalda by train on a Friday evening to supervise the work in his factories in Jhalda and Murhu and returns on the following Monday. Many a young man would not stand the strain of such a double journey and also attend to office work during the week, but Mr. Arathoon is a man of a different calibre. Perhaps his thoughts of by-gone days, the happy days spent with his life-long partner is the latent source of the wonderful energy exhibited by a man of his age

Mr. Arathoon still thinks highly of his friends and seldom talks about those who may have harmed him

I have tried to complete Mr. Arathoon's life story so that he may have an opportunity to see himself as some others see him and I trust I have been able to do justice to a man who started from nothing and has done so well for himself. He has had many difficulties but he has overcome them all

He has kept a happy home, happy children and grand children, happy office and factory, where there has never been a strike.

My earnest wish is that all his loved ones may once more foregather and kindle greater happiness in a man who has loved to be happy and make others happy all his life

Such a gathering would be the one of the great days in Mr. Arathoon's life, comparable to the day he started his factory, to the day he got married, to the day he celebrated the 50th anniversary of establishing his factory and equal to the day of his Golden Wedding.

To be continued.

APPENDIX

(Extract from)

Lac

and the

Indian Lac Research Institute

by

DOROTHY NORRIS, M Sc , F.I C., P M. GLOVER, B Sc.

and

R. W. ALDIS, Ph.D , D.I C

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What is meant by Lac and Shellac

Lac is a resinous substance secreted by the lac insect, *Laccifer lacca* as a protective covering , the raw materials from which this secretion is manufactured are the sap juices of certain trees on which the insect is parasitic and which enter its alimentary canal by way of the specialised mouth parts of proboscis. The lac insect is in fact, theoretically at least, an injurious insect, cultivated on account of the commercial value of its protective secretion.

The insect starts its life as a minute red coloured larvæ a little over half a millimeter in length. The larvæ emerage in large numbers from the bodies of the female lac insects in mature lac, are active and capable of crawling a considerable distance. This

emergence of larvæ is known as swarming, and as many as 1,000 may emerge from the body of a single female, the average number is however between 200—500. The larvæ are insect-like in appearance, having a head bearing the ocellanæ or simple eyes and a pair of antennæ, a thorax with three pairs of walking legs and two pairs of spiracles and an abdomen with a pair of long terminal setæ. The mouth parts are ventral in position and consist of two pairs of setæ, representing the specialised mandibles and maxillæ, together forming a sucking tube, the proboscis.

These larvæ are introduced on to the host tree on which it is proposed to raise a lac crop, by a process know as Inoculation or Infection This consists of tying sticks of mature lac from which swarming is about to occur, of convenient length generally 9″ to 12″ to the branches of the host tree, with pieces of string. The sticks may be tied singly or in bundles of 3 or 4 or they may be simply laced among the host branches These sticks are known as brood lac as they contain the young swarm.

The larvæ as they emerage from the female cells in these brood sticks crawl on to the branches of the host tree, where they settle on the undersides of the young and succulent twigs and branches. The larvæ force their mouth parts through the bark and into the phloem and xylem tissues and start to feed on the sap juices of the tree.

It is the practice for the cultivator to prune the trees on which it is proposed to grow a lac crop, prior to infection, in order to provide a maximum of branches and twigs in the optimum young succulent condition for the lac larvæ to settle on.

The larval settlement is very dense often completely covering the lower surface of the twigs and branches, and even extending on the upper surface, one larva being extremely close and sometimes touching the next The settlement is in the neighbourhood of 150—200 larvæ per inch. Lac secretion begins almost immediately, at first appearing as a shining layer over the bodies of the settled larvæ, this is gradually increased and added to, and in time the secretion from one larva meets and coalesces with that from another and in this way a continuous or semi-continuous covering or encrustation is formed.

The larvæ though extremely similar are actually of two sorts, male and female, and are separable by minute and not well defined differences under a low power microscope by an experienced worker. The percentages of males and females approximates to 30% and 70% respectively though the proportions vary from crop to crop.

The larvæ feed, grow and continue to secrete lac over their bodies, thus forming a more or less globular cell or test around their bodies, inside which they live.

This cell is continually added to from the inside during the period of lac secretion.

The cells produced by male and female larvæ differ in shape and can easily be distinguished after some time. The male cell is elongate, roughly cigar shaped, the brachial pores (through which respiration occurs) are towards the anterior end ; and posteriorly in the fully formed cells is a circular opening covered by a flap or operculum *via* which the male insect eventually emerges. The female cell is smaller and in general shape oval, towards the anterior end lie the brachial pores, posteriorly there is a single opening, the Anal Tubercular opening , longitudinally a mid dorsal ridge indicates the position of the cast larval skin

Through these three openings of the lac cell, the Brachial pores and the Anal Tubercular Pore, waxy white filaments protude, and may be so numerous as to give the whole encrustation a woolly white appearance. They are produced by glands in the insect body and their presence is an indication that the insects are alive and healthy. Their function is mechanical, ensuring that these essential openings in the lac cell are not blocked during lac secretion. Their absence does not necessarily denote unhealthy lac as healthy lac may frequently be seen devoid of filaments or with very short filaments only, these having been blown away by wind or broken off by insects crawling over the lac encrustation.

Through the Anal Tubercular Pore, a sweet sticky substance, known as 'honey dew' is also secreted, and forms a sticky covering on the twigs and upper surface of the leaves of lac bearing trees. It forms a nutrient material for a black fungoid growth, species of *Capnodium* and *Fumago* which overspreads the twigs and upper surfaces of the leaves of lac infected trees, giving them a characteristic black sooty appearance The fungus appears to be a harmless saprophyte. The honey dew also is attractive to ants who frequently visit lac infected trees to obtain it.

The female insects undergo three ecdyses or moults within their cells, the male larva moults attains the second stage and after a while passes through a psudo-prepupal stage and becomes a pseudo-pupa The adult male insect emerges from the cell by pushing open the operculum and moves over the encrustation, fertilising the females by way of the Anal Tubercular opening The male insects may be winged or apterous, there are three pairs of legs and the abdomen bears apically a prominent genital sheath containing the penis. The adult male which has emerged from its cell has no mouth parts and does not feed, each is capable of fertilising several females during its brief life, after which it dies. At this stage the cells of both sexes are small and the lac secreted by the male is of no commercial importance. When the males have emerged the encrustation is made up entirely of female cells and the empty cells from which the males have emerged.

The female insect having once settled down never leaves her cell. She has by this time lost eyes and legs and bears only rudimentary antennæ She however continues to secrete lac and the female cells increase in size, and the originally thin encrustation of lac becomes a thick coating partly or completely surrounding the twigs of the host tree. It is thus the female which is responsible for the production of the lac encrustation, the empty male cells become occluded by them, if the encrustation is dissolved in a solvent as for example alcohol, empty male cells can be discovered.

The eggs during this time are developing in the paired ovaries in the bodies of the females and finally mature, and are oviposited into a space formed inside the lac cell, by contraction of the body of the female, which is known as the incubating chamber. Here they hatch into larvæ which finally emerge from the cell *via* the Anal Tubercular opening. This emergence has already been referred to and is known as swarming. The period of growth from the egg to the mature female giving rise to eggs again is known as a Life Cycle and corresponds to a lac crop

When lac is cut from the tree mature, a portion is generally retained for use as brood, and the remainder is sold for manufacture into shellac. Immature lac being of course of no use as brood is all sold for manufacture.

Lac may be sold for manufacture in two conditions,

If it is immature and still contains the living insects it is known as Ari, if it has been cut after swarming, or been cut and allowed to swarm before sale and contains therefore only the dead bodies of the insects it is known as phunki. It is the colouring matter of the insect bodies, dead or alive which forms the crimson lac dye.

Prior to sale the lac encrustation is scraped from the twigs by means of knives or is broken off with the fingers. In the case of Kusum lac the encrustation is less easy to seperate from the stick as it often surrounds the twigs, it frequently reaches the market cut into short pieces of one to three inches in length still on the stick.

Brood lac after use is scraped in the same way and is also sold for manufacture being then of course phunki

So much for what lac is A brief account of the purified manufactured product shellac may not be out of place.

The manual country process of shellac manufacture in the most widely used and is responsible for about 75% of the world's output. The process can be conveniently separated into three steps *i e.*, the production of 'crushed lac', 'seedlac' and shellac.

The method adopted for the preparation of crushed lac depends on the type of raw material. There are two

main types (a) Kusum lac with thick encrustation still firmly attached to short lengths of stick and (b) Baisakhi and Katki lac which has a thinner encrustation and can be readily removed from an accompanying stick by scraping In the case of the former material the lac is crushed in a roller corn crusher (power driven in some of the larger factories) with the space between the rollers so adjusted that the lac is broken from the sticks which can be separated readily by subsequent sifting. In the case of Baisakhi type lac the encrustation is scraped off and the sticks removed by hand by picking and winnowing before going to the crushing machine

The crushed lac is now ready for the washing process. The apparatus consists of a row of tea cup shaped cement pots or *nands* about 2½ feet in height and diameter , the inside having a special roughened surface About 40 lbs of crushed lac are placed in a pot, covered with water and washed by the Ghasander. He stands in the *nand* and rubs the lac with feet against the rough sides of the pot and so crushes the lac cells and washes out the dye. The dye is crimson coloured, and consists of the colouring matter of the bodies of the lac insects After about half an hour of this operation the water is allowed to settle and the surface scum, consisting of sticks, fibrous and animal matter, is removed. The water is then scooped out roughly filtered through cloth to remove suspended lac. The process is repeated three or four times until most of the dye has been removed. After the last washing the seedlac' as

the material is now called, is spread out to dry on a cement floor In recent years an increasing amount of seedlac has been exported as such without further treatment. This material is chiefly consumed by American Bleached Lac manufacturers For export the 'seedlac' is graded according to colour and insolubility in alcohol. Baisakhi type lac cannot be economically washed to give a 'seedlac' with low insolubles. Accordingly this seedlac is always blended with a proportion of Kusum type seedlac ; lac from Burma and Siam being convenient and cheap for this purpose. Unfortunately the 'bleachability' of Burma and Siam lac is not good and seedlac consumers are beginning to realise that low insoluble content is not necessarily a criterion of good 'seedlac' for bleaching purposes

If the 'seedlac' is to be converted into shellac it is subjected to a melting process. A mixture is prepared from various seedlacs blended according to colour and fusibility. A very old seedlac with low fusibility requires addition of fresh seedlac to ensure a good yield In certain cases rosin may be added, in quantities up to 12%, for the same purpose. To meet trade requirements of colour a suspension of yellow arsenic sulphide may also be mixed in and dried. The blended lac is now poured into a cloth bag about 30 ft long and 2 inches in diameter The quality of the resulting product is governed partly by the quality of the cloth used. Close woven drill is used by some manufacturers, while others prefer a double bag of cheaper cloth. The

source of heat consists of a Dutch oven-shaped fire-place or *bhattu* about 3 feet long by 1½ feet high and 1 foot in depth containing a well glowing charcoal fire. At one end of the fire sits the melter or Karigar holding one end of the long bag. The other end is rotated by a small boy (phirwaya) using a simple windless. The heat of the fire melts the lac which is squeezed through the cloth by the Karigar applying resistance to the twisting. The lac filtering through the bag is worked up with a large iron spatula to ensure thorough mixing of the lac and the wax which tends to separate. Over-heating is prevented by an occasional sprinkling of water. When sufficient lac has collected on the outside of the bag and has been sufficiently worked the molten mass is rapidly transferred to the glazed porcelain surface of a horizontal hot water cylinder 2½ feet long and 10 inches in diameter An assistant or Bhilwaya spreads the mass evently over the cylinder by means of a palm frond The sheet is then removed and after warming before the fire is stretched by means of the Bhilwaya's hands, feet and teeth. When cool the thick edgs and any observed specks of dirt are removed and the resulting product is the shellac of commerce

In certain cases the stretching process is dispensed with and so-called 'Button lac' is prepared by scooping up small quantities of the molten lac and dropping them on to a zinc sheet instead of transferring them to the hot water bottle. The resulting buttons of lac, about three inches in diameter and ¼ inch thick, are stamped

with the manufacturers mark just before they set hard on cooling.

The country process is remarkable in that the purification is carried out using the minimum amount of heating. Thus the good properties of shellac, so readily destroyed by heat, are retained. The process is not economically inefficient except for the large amounts of bye-products which sell at unremunerative prices. The main bye-products are

(a) *Molamma.*—This is the finely divided dustlike, material separated from the seedlac. It may contain up to 70% shellac.

(b) *Kiri*—This is a bye-product of the melting process When the pure shellac filters through the bag it leaves the dirt and refuse behind. When sufficient of this has collected the bag is slit and the accumulation, usually about 3 lbs, is scooped out and pressed into a cake about ½ inch thick. This contains about 50% shellac.

(c) *Pasewa.*—After the melting process the used bags have the appearance of twisted rope and contain about 5% shellac which could not be squeezed out. This shellac is removed by boiling the bags in dilute soda solution The lac is loosened and floats to the surface where it is collected and pressed into cakes called *pasewa* This material contains about 90% shellac. Incidentally this process serves to wash the bags which, after drying and

repairing by the tailor can be used again for manufacturing shellac.

The bulk of the shellac manufactured by the country process is of a quality known as TN, a term dating back to the earliest days of shellac manufacture. A somewhat superior quality is known as Standard I and still purer shellacs are known as 'Fines' and 'Superfines'. Most manufacturers have their own 'mark' for the particular grade of 'Fine' and 'Superfine' shellac their factory produces

About 25% of the worlds output of shellac is made by mechanical process. These are used in one factory in Calcutta and several on the continent of Europe. Many methods are employed including solvent extraction processes using alcohol, and steam heating and pressing processes. The details of the procedure used are guarded as trade secrets, the few patents which have been taken out giving very little fundamental information. A large range of qualities are produced varying from a very dark 'garnet lac' with large additions of rosin to an extremely pale coloured shellac which is prepared by decolourising an alcoholic solution with animal charcoal and evaporating off the alcohol. This product is superior in colour to any shellac made by the country process. Solvent extraction methods are also advantageous in that wax-free shellac can readily be prepared by this means. Marketing of wax-free shellac and its use in conjunction with cellulose lacquers may well develop into industry of considerable importance.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE LAC INDUSTRY.

The history and development of the lac industry in India form a subject of particular interest to both the historian and the scientist. The word lac derived from the Sanskrit Laksha (in Hindi Lakh) meaning a hurdred thousand, an allusion to the very numerous larvæ of the insect concerned in the industry, which emerge at the swarming period According to Sir George Watt the word *laksha* in the Atharvaveda seems to denote *Butea frondosa*, a common lac host, which is described by more recent Sanskrit writers as *laksha-taru* or lac tree In the Periplus written about 80 A D. *Lakkos chromatinos* or lac dye, is mentioned as conveyed from India to Aduli on the African coast of the Red Sea , and in 250 A. D Aelian mentioned that there was an Indian insect which yielded colouring matter. It was for this colouring matter or lac dye that lac was originally cultivated.

That lac yields two distinct products a dye and a resin does not seem to have been fully appreciated until the 16th Century Garcia de Orta, physician to the Portugese Governor of India appears to have been the first European to examine critically and describe lac in India and to give a detailed account of the properties of both dye and resin. His work was published in Goa in 1563. It is recorded in about 1590 A D in the Ain-i-Akbari, that Akbar the Great made use of the lac resin mixed with pigment in the preparation of varnishes

to be applied to screens of public buildings. In 1596 Jan Huyglen van Linschoten who was deputed by the King of Portugal on a scientific mission to the East Indies published a descriptive account of the resin obtained from lac. In the records of the East India Company in the early 17th. century frequent mention is made of "gum lack", but it was not until the demand for cochineal drew attention to lac dye, that the lac industry became commercially important

Lac dye though inferior in many ways to cochineal (which is also a natural product made from an insect related to the lac insect, *Dactylopius cocous* (*Cocous cacti*) a native of Maxico living on certain species of cactus) was found to serve the same purpose and to be much cheaper, and a large trade in lac dye sprang up, and numerous lac factories came into prominence owned directly or indirectly by the East India Company. A method was found by which the dye could be pressed into cakes, and the trade in this product attained such importance in the 18th. century that the resin from the lac was almost relegated to the position of an unimportant bye product.

The discovery of aniline dyes by Sir W. H. Perkin and others and the perfection of chemical dyes put an end to the cochineal trade and at the same time to the Indian lac dye industry, an example of natural products being supplanted by a synthetic laboratory made substitute. By this time however the importance of the resin

had been realised in Europe and methods and directions of using it had been discovered. The importance of the industry from being that of dye production became that of resin production and the dye, formerly the main product, took the position of minor bye-product of the resin factory , and it is this resin both in its unmanufactured form lac and in the manufactured form shellac which now mainly comprises the industry.

THE END.

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